SOME SELECTED

SPEECHES & WRITINGS OF

RUKMINI DEVI ARUNDALE

VOL. I





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Rukmini Devi Arundale

CONTENTS

Indian Dance

Dance in India is infinitely rich and varied, as varied in fact as the land of India itself, but with the same underlying unity which knits the people of the country together as one. Both the folk dance as well as the classical forms show this variety, threaded together by the unity of spirit and of basic teaching. All the dances derive from the same sources and the origin of all the classical systems has been the temple. It is in the temple that they were conceived and nourished. It was also in the temple that they attained their full maturity. It is true that dance was also performed in the houses of princes and noblemen and on social occasions such as marriages, but the impulse that gave them birth was religious. In the case of the folk dances their origin must have been the same as that of folk dances elsewhere in the world; in the impulse in man to express his fundamental joy of life in rhythmic movement. While folk dances developed against this basic urge of the common man, classical dances developed fostered by religion. Actually, dance forms an intrinsic part of worship in the temples. Just as man offers flowers in the temple to God, so has he offered music and dance as being the most beautiful creative expressions of the divine. India alone has a concept of a God who dances. Siva is Nataraja, Lord of dancers, Who dances in the Hall of Consciousness and weaves into it the rhythm of the Universe. Within His Cosmic Dance are included the Divine prerogatives of Creation, Preservation, Regeneration, Veiling and Benediction.

Dance in India has had a hoary history. We find mention of it in the *Vedas* themselves. There are several references to it in the *Rig Veda*, though they are not specific enough for us to form any adequate idea of the kind of dance of those days. The references in the great epics, such as *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*

are more profuse. Arjuna, one of the great heroes of the *Mahabharata*, during his period of exile, was employed by King Virata as a teacher of music and dance to the princesses in the palace. From this it would seem that in those days dance was a highly respected art, practised as much by the noble ladies of the courts of kings as by the professional dancers. In the *Malavikagnimitra* of Kalidasa, a play in which the dance plays an important part and the heroine of which is a dancer, it is related how the courts of kings employed teachers of the dance to teach the princesses and also others who showed promise in the art. The importance that it enjoyed in the whole realm of Indian culture may also be judged by the fact that several kings from the mediaevel time till the 18th and 19th centuries wrote treatises on the subject. Some of them also wrote commentaries on the great classics of the dance.

The traditional history of the dance as related in the *Abhinaya Darpana* is well known. Bharata, the father of Indian dance and dramaturgy, once produced a play for the delectation of the celestials. This play was later performed before Siva and His consort Parvati. The former, pleased with Bharata's skill, asked one of His attendants, Tandu, a skilled dancer, to instruct the sage in the principles of His own cosmic dance. Originally taught by Tandu, the art took the name of *Tandava*. At the same time Parvati taught Usha, the wife of the grandson of Sri Krishna, the way of her own dance. This came to be called *Lasya* being the feminine mode. Usha in her turn taught it to the ladies of Dwaraka in Northern Gujarat, from where it spread to the various parts of India.

The earliest scientific treatises of the dance are not available to us. In the time of the great grammarian, Panini, who lived not later than the 4th century B.C., a treatise written by two authors: Silalin and Krisashwin was known. Panini, dealing with the root "Nrit" (to dance) mentions the work of these two, who presumably were authorities known to him on the subject. This work is unfortunately lost to us. The earliest detailed work on the dance now known is the *Natya Sastra* of Bharata. As far as one can judge, this work as it now stands should be dated about the 2nd century B.C. The *Natya Sastra* is a work which deals not only with the dance, but also with drama and with music. Actually it is a great exposition of

Indian aesthetics. According to Bharata and to the later authors, dance was to be taken as a component of music. The word *Sangita*, denoting "complete music", was threefold in character; comprising vocal music and instrumental music and the dance. In the Tamil literature of Southern India, written roughly at the same time as the *Natya Sastra*, there are detailed references to the dance. *Silappadikaram*, a Tamil work written probably in the first century after Christ, has a dancer for a heroine and contains detailed descriptions of the dance. Comparison of this with the exposition in the *Natya Sastra* would indicate that at that time there was an unified system of dance, which held sway over entire India. Since the time of Bharata, many books have been written on the art, chief among which are the *Bharatarnava* and *Abhinaya Darpana* of Nandikeswara the dates of which must be roughly the same as that of the *Natya Sastra*, the *Dasarupaka* of Dhananjaya, 10th century A.D., the *Sangita Ratnakara* of Sarangadeva, 12th century, the *Sangita Saramrita* of Tulajaji, Maharaja of Tanjore, 18th century and *Balarama Bharata* of Balarama Varma, Maharaja of Travancore, 18th century. Mention must also be made of the great commentary of Abhinava Gupta on the *Natya Sastra*, written in the 11th century and the commentaries of Kallinatha and Simha Bhupala on the *Sangita Ratnakara*. There are besides, very valuable works on the subject in Indian languages other than Sanskrit in which language all the works mentioned above have been written .

As has been said earlier, at one time, in all of India there must have been one system of the classical dance. In time, each cultural area in the country seems to have acquired a local idiom. This could be attributed to many causes. Movements from folk dances peculiar to these areas might have been assimilated into the classical art. Foreign influences may have been at work, encouraged by trade or invasion. Due to various reasons, some area might have been shut off from contact with others and developed new characteristics in seclusion. Thus must have arisen the four main classical schools of the dance in India, namely; Bharata Natya, in the South, more particularly in the Tamil country, Kathakali in Kerala, Manipuri in the North-East and Kathak centered at Lucknow and Jaipur. Both local and foreign influences are clearly evident in Manipuri. In Kathak there is a predominant Persian influence. In the case of Kathakali the rules of Bharata seem to have been

superimposed on an ancient local art. This is clear from the glaring departures that Kathakali makes from the *Sastra* of Bharata. The Kathakali stage represents many things which, according to Bharata, are unfit for dramatic representation. In spite of these local variations and colloquialisms, there is no doubt that, on the whole, all dance forms have derived from one central body of tradition.

Whether it be poetry, drama, dance or music, in the course of practice, all Indian art has developed certain concepts and laws which are common to all of them. Of these the concept of *Rasa* or aesthetic consciousness, holds central place. The object of all art is the evoking of *Rasa*. This enkindling of emotion, which results in impersonal delight, whatever the nature of the emotion may be, is *Rasa*. It is totally different from an emotion that is the outcome of a mere experience of the senses. In the latter case the feeling is limited. In dance, the emotion portrayed is impersonal and shared. It has undergone a transmutation, so that what a member of the audience feels, even when viewing the delineation of sorrow, is not something unpleasant, but is really a delight that is aesthetically conveyed through the superb portrayal of the dancer.

The *Rasas* are now generally accepted to be nine; namely, love, ridicule, pathos, heroism, fury, terror, disgust, wonder and peace. The sentiment with all its variations and gradations, its refinements and subtleties, which gives the greatest scope to the dancer, is *Sringara* or love. According to one of the great authorities on Indian rhetoric, *Sringara* is the only *Rasa*, and all the others arise as modifications from it. Devotion, which forms the subject matter of most Indian dances, is transcendent love.

In dance, *Rasa* or the aesthetic mood is conveyed through *Bhava* or expression. Therefore the greatest gift that a dancer can have is the capacity- natural and trained - for the expression of sentiment or emotion, for without this it is not possible to evoke the appropriate sentiment in a cultured audience.

The technique through which *Bhava* or expression manifests itself is called *Abhinaya*. *Abhinaya* literally means, to carry forward, that is to convey a sentiment, a story, a situation to the audience through various means. According to the means employed, there are four kinds of *Abhinaya*. These are :

1. Expressions through the posture of the body and through gesture. This is known as *ANGIKA*. Under this heading come the various postures, gait, movements and the combinations of these specific movements which form one dance sequence. The hand gestures are called *Hastas* and are made either with one or with two hands. They are the alphabet of a regular language. Each hand gesture or *Hasta* can have several meanings according to the way in which it is used. These *Hastas* are an important part of all Indian dancing and serve to give the meaning of the words of the song to which the dance has been composed. Of course, by themselves they can tell only a very bare story. Without the all important facial expression, they become puppet like.

2. The second type is expression through the spoken word or *VACHIKA*. This again is highly important to the dance. Songs are specially composed for the dance, containing the appropriate sentiment in the appropriate musical mode or *raga*, and this must be sung in such a way as to give the dancer the greatest scope for expression. In certain schools of the dance, as in Kathakali, the dancer is not allowed to sing or speak; only the musician who provides the music is responsible for this type of expression. In Bharata Natya on the other hand, no dancer is considered to be truly good unless she can also sing during portions of the dance. This is true also of other schools of the dance.

3. The third type of *Abhinaya* is expression through costume. This comes under the heading of *AHARYA*. In Bharata Natya this is not so important. It is sufficient if the costume is beautiful and appropriate. In Kathakali however, each actor is costumed differently and that and the make up indicate the type of character that the dancer is intended to portray. In this school great attention is paid to every detail of this aspect, as in the case of the crown worn on the head, the jewels and above all the elaborate make up, according to which the audience knows the character type.

4. The fourth is the actual delineation of the effect that emotion produces in the body known as *SATVIKA*. There are supposed to be eight such changes in the body produced by emotion, such as: change of colour, broken speech, horripulation, the shedding of tears etc., When these effects are produced in the

body of the dancer, the expression of the corresponding emotion spontaneously shows itself in the face. It is this facial expression which is of the greatest importance. Without it no cultured Indian will consider even the most skilful dance to be anything more than a display of physical dexterity.

In the different classical styles these various types of *Abhinaya* are used differently. There is for example, difference in the hand gestures *hastas* - as used in Bharata Natya and Kathakali. In Kathakali these gestures are dynamic rather than static. A *hasta* has a beginning, a period of movement and an end. In Bharata Natya they are more static and indicate just what is intended to be portrayed. The names of the gestures also differ. Such difference are also to be noted in the other schools. The same is true of *Aharya* and *Satvika*. In Kathakali the portrayal of emotion is exaggerated and stylised, while in Bharata Natya it is expressed more naturally and is a natural outer expression of the inner feeling.

According to whether there is *Abhinaya* or not, all dance that can be seen in India today may be divided into *Nritta* and *Nritya*. *Nritta* is dancing pure and simple, in which the only sentiment expressed is the joy of movement. A number of items in a dance programme will be *Nritta*. The other type is called *Nritya*, which is interpretation, where there is also the portrayal of sentiment and in this type, the various kinds of *Abhinaya* form a very important part. The ordinary dance programme would contain several items of *Nritya* also.

In the four classical schools of the Indian dance we may say that Bharata Natya in style and in the details of practice, conforms most closely with the rules and standards set down by Bharata in his *Natya Sastra*. If we consider one dance form to have been common to all parts of India in the past, that which is most closely allied to it at the present time would be Bharata Natya.

Bharata Natya is now prevalent primarily in the Tamil country, in the South-East of India. It is an art which had royal and religious patronage for centuries and dancers were attached to the great temples and participated in the offerings at worship. Bharata Natya used to be called Temple Dance, though today, under legislation, there are no dancers attached to temples and the dance no longer finds

a place in temple ritual. Actually the word Bharata Natya has no traditional acceptance as meaning a particular style. It only means dance which is in accordance with the rules laid down by Bharata. The word Bharata itself has also a significance from the point of view of the dance. Its three syllabels: Bha, Ra and Ta stand for the three components of all dancing: Bha for *Bhava* or expression, Ra for *Raga* or melody, and Ta for *Tala* or rhythm. The original name for the classical dance in the Tamil country was *Sadir* or *Chinna Melam*.

The style of music for Bharata Natya is the Carnatic style which is prevalent in the South of India. There are one or two singers. The chief singer usually also does the *Nattuvangam* or direction of the dance. He plays all the rhythms on small, palm-sized cymbals of bronze. There is usually an instrumental accompaniment on a *Mukhaveena* which is a small wind instrument, or a Flute, or, twenty years ago, a regular Clarionet. The most important accompaniment is, however, the *Mridangam* or the drum, which also follows the rhythm with skill and precision. The dancer wears anklets of small bronze bells which also emphasise the rhythm.

Those who created the present tradition of this type of dancing were four brothers, belonging to the city of Tanjore, who were great artists. Their names were: Ponniah, Chinniah, Vadivelu and Sivanandam. They were attached to the court of Serfoji, the Maharaja who ruled over Tanjore in the middle of the 19^{th} century. These brothers were also musicians and composers of a high order, but they are more famous as teachers of the dance, as choreographers, and most of all as those who were responsible for editing dance programmes according to their present sequence in a dance recital. They also introduced significant changes in the dance as they found it. All performances of *Sadir* begin with what is called an *Alarippu*, which is a good example of *Nritta* or pure dance. The dancing is done to the accompaniment of drum syllables, uttered by the conductor of the dance. This represents a dedication of the body to the service of the Highest through the dance. The next item is *Jatiswaram*, which is also *Nritta*, danced to a particular type of music. The third is *Sabdam*, which is a simple composition in which the main feature is *Abhinaya* or the portrayal of sentiment. The fourth is the main part of the recital and is called a *Varnam* and this contains in full measure all the important features of the dance. It includes *Nritta* as well as *Abhinaya*. These are followed

by several items of pure *Abhinaya*, which are called *Padams*, for which music has been composed by very great composers. The subject matter of all these *Padams* is the yearning of the individual soul for union with God. This yearning is put into the poetic language of the plea of a woman to her lover. According to the subtleties of the sentiment expressed the *Nayikas* or heroines of these *Padams* fall into different classes. To a cultured Indian audience these *Padams* with their exquisite poetry and music and the expression of the subtle shades of emotion by the dancer form the most interesting part of the programme. But to a newcomer they are likely to seem too slow in tempo and therefore rather dull. The *Padams* are followed by a *Javali* which is a lighter type of song in quicker tempo, and the *Javali* by the *Tillana*, which has brilliant footwork and forms an effective foil to the slow tempo of the *Padams*. The recital usually closes with a *Sloka*, which is a verse in Sanskrit in praise of some manifestation of Godhead. The *Sloka* is not set to rhythmic beat.

The *Nritta* or pure dance parts are characterised by brilliant and complicated footwork, which follows very complicated beats. The posture of the body and of the arms has to be perfect and sculpturesque. In *Nritta*, the hand gestures are called *Nritta Hastas* and do not convey any special meaning. In the temples of South India one can see many of the dance poses in sculpture and one realises how one of the main features of Bharata Natya is its sculpturesque quality. In seeing Bharata Natya, one also realises its essential musical texture. The sequences give the impression of music made visible.

Dance dramas also developed out of the Bharata Natya tradition, using the same technique as is used in the solo dances of the *Devadasis*. Some of them, as in the temples of Melattur, Soolamangalam, Oothukadu and other places in the Tanjore district of the Madras State, were famous. Those that have come down to us were composed by Venkatarama Bhagavatar of Melattur in the early 19th century. These dramas, which are still enacted in the temples in these villages, also became nearly extinct through want of patronage. However, they have since been revived and brought to public notice. In these dance dramas, only men of the priestly class take part. The subject matter for these plays are all stories from the great epics of India.

Another type of dance drama which employs Bharata Natya technique is the

Kuravanji. All *Kuravanjis* are alike in subject matter and portray the human soul, represented by the heroine, in search of God. The oldest and the best of the *Kuravanjis* now available was written by Rajappa Kavirayar at Kuttralam in the Tirunelveli district of the Madras State. This is called the *Kuttrala Kuravanji* and has been produced by me. The only *Kuravanji* still performed in a temple is the Sarabhoji *Kuravanji* in praise of Maharaja Serfoji, annually performed in the Big Temple at Tanjore. In these *Kuravanjis* only women take part. The *Kuchipudi* dance dramas of Andhra must also be assigned to the Bharata Natya School. These dance dramas too are performed by men of the priestly class belonging to the village of Kuchipudi in the Krishna district of the Andhra State. The most famous of these plays was composed by Siddhendra Yogi in the 17th or 18th century. The dances of Orissa, except for the *Chau* dances of Seraikella have also apparently derived from Bharata Natya. The *Chau* dances have a technique and a style of their own. In the past, Tanjore in Madras State was the great home of Bharata Natya. Cities like Kanchipuram were also important centres of the dance. Today it has spread all over India. However, the best Bharata Natya dancing today is to be seen in the city of Madras itself where, besides my own institution of Kalakshetra, there are several other academies teaching this system of the dance.

The second of the South Indian schools of the dance *Kathakali* developed in Kerala, which is the south-western part of India. This developed from earlier forms, such as the *Chakkiyar Koothu*, which is an expert form of mono-acting in which there is a certain amount of dancing mainly of the *Abhinaya* type, and the traditional acting in Kerala of Sankrit plays called *Koodiyattam*, produced according to the rules of the Sanskrit stage.

The first writer of Kathakali plays was the Raja of Kottarakara. In the famous temple of Guruvayur there is the traditional *Krishnanattam* and out of this and other forms developed the highly stylised art which is the *Kathakali* of today. All the *Kathakalis* which are in vogue today were written only from the 17th century onwards. They are written in mixed Malayalam and Sanskrit and have high literary value. In modern times there has been a great revival of interest in *Kathakali* due to the efforts of the Malayali poet Vallathol Narayana Menon, who established an

Institution called Kerala Kalamandalam in Cheruthurithi near Shoranur in the Kerala State, to teach this art.

All *Kathakalis* are dance dramas and only men take part in them. The stories are taken from the old epics. As has been mentioned earlier, the costumes are very striking and give an indication of the character type that the actor represents. The make up is also distinct and takes a very long time to put on. The make up is so vivid that it obliterates the personality of the individual and the face looks as if a mask has been placed on it. The dominating types of make up are four in number. One type is meant to represent heroes and good men, the other a bad man who has some redeeming traits; the third represents really evil men and the fourth women characters. Besides these, there are innumerable minor types, such as demons, forest tribes, sages etc., The Kathakali play beings in the early evening and lasts till early morning. The singer is accompanied by two types of drums. The acting in Kathakali is very vivid and realistic. The very strong facial expression is toned down by the make up. The art has a great deal of primitive vigour combined with high classicism.

Of all Indian dance, Kathak, which is typical of Northern India is the most secular. Founded according to the precept of Bharata, new influences were grafted on to the parent stem with the Muslim invasion into India. It became greatly patronised by the Muslim rulers and noblemen, and certain extra-Indian, mainly Persian influences affected it to a great extent. It completely came out of the temples and became a pure and simple court dance. This is what came to be called *Nautch*. The word *Nautch* is a corrupted form of the Sanskrit word *Natya*, which became abbreviated into *Nat* and corrupted into the Hindi form, *Nautch* meaning dance. The *Nautch* dancers were both men and women and the character of the dance is perhaps a mixture of the masculine and feminine types. Due to the general habits of the dancers, the *Nautch* soon acquired a bad reputation, till in the last two or three centuries it became synonymous with a bad way of living. However, the Kathak is extremely skillful and graceful and the Centres where it developed were mainly in Lucknow in the Uttar Pradesh and Jaipur in Rajasthan. Lahore, now in Pakistan, was also one of these Centres. At present the best performances of this style can be seen at Delhi.

During the last hundred years a genius, called Kalka Binda, gave a new lease of life to this form of dance. His decendants are still great teachers of the *Kathak*. The technique of *Kathak* dancing is very brilliant. The footwork is specially notable. Accomplished *Kathak* dancers can reproduce in their footwork the exact sounds made by the drums and they are very skilled in bringing out the sounds in the anklets that they wear. Traditionally these anklets have three rows of bells and great dancers are said to have the power to control the movements of their feet to such an extent that they can control the sound of any one of the rows of the bells. The arm movements and the general body postures of *Kathak* dancing are weak. The *Hastas* have degenerated to the extent that they often do not have any special meaning and are merely decorative. It is not interpretative in the sense that *Bharata Natya* is, for example, and even in the pure dance parts it lacks the sculptural quality of *Bharata Natya*.

A *Kathak* programme consists mainly of three types of dances. The first of these is called *Amad*, which has some vague resemblance to the *Alarippu* of *Bharata Natya*, and is a figurative salutation made by the artist to the audience. Then come the *Parans*, which are the most characteristic parts of the *Kathak*, with all their intricate and brilliant footwork. The third variety, called *Gaths*, are what may broadly be called interpretative and have some trace of *Abhinaya* in them. The musical accompaniment for *Kathak* consists of a singer, who not only sings but reproduces the drum syllables with his voice. These reproduced drum syllables are called *Bols*. The dancer also often utters these *Bols* whilst dancing. The musician is accompanied by a *Sarangi* player. A *Sarangi* is an Indian type of violin. The drum accompaniment is provided by the *Tabala*. The *Tabala*, unlike the *Mridangam* which is used in Bharata Natya performances, consists of two drums, one played by the right hand and the other by the left hand.

Manipuri dancing is the classical style as obtains in the North West of India. It is centered in the State of Manipur. As a matter of fact, dance forms a very important part of the lives of the people of Assam and in the State of Assam it still retains its religious character.

In the Sathras of Assams, which are the religious Centers in that part of the

country, religious dances are still performed. In the state of Manipur at the eastern extremity of Assam, dance is an integral part of cultural and religious life. Both men and women dance. This type of dancing was unknown to the rest of India until Rabindranath Tagore went to Manipur and brought back a teacher to teach dance in his school at Santiniketan. However, Manipuri dancing as it developed in Santiniketan, acquired certain characteristics of its own. The pure form, as one may see it in Manipur, shows great differences. The costumes in Manipur dancing are very picturesque. The women wear hooped skirts and the men equally graceful costumes. Contrary to general understanding, there are different types of dancing in Manipur, where the majority of the population dances. The dances center round religious stories. The stories of Sri Krishna form a very important part of the themes. The movements in Manipuri are often slow and graceful in the case of women. The masculine dance is virile and vigorous. Unfortunately true Manipuri dancing is rarely seen outside the confines of the State.

Dance in India has been so closely interlinked with religion, that today it is impossible to think of it divorced from this essential background. I suppose this is because both dance and religion endeavour to express the idea of creation, or rhythmic movement. Of the influence of spirit upon matter. Religion endeavours to express in words the concept of Divinity and raises man to it. So does the classical dance in India in a different way endeavour to express that concept in terms of movement, of colour, of symbols, of music, and so to exalt the onlooker and to bring him into closer understanding with those rhythmic potencies which the dancer strives to embody and realise. It is thus that the dance, properly understood and performed, becomes a bridge to the inner spirit which ensouls all life. And the dancer properly inspired, should thrill with the very joyousness of life and endeavour to convey some of the sparkling qualities that are inherent in the reservoir of creative art that she is trying to realise. This is the ideal which made dance in India great and it has to inspire the artist again, so that it can again become a great expression of the Human Sprit.

- Article sent to Mr.Curtis for "Fodor's Modern Guides, Brussels. -20.09.1961

It, must be understood that the present solo recital of Bharata Natya used to be called Sadir Kacheri which had its own associations because of which I prefered to call my recitals Bharata Natya recitals. Unfortunately it is now being called Bharat Natyam which again completely spoils the beauty & significance of the Dance. The four famous brothers Siwanandam, Vadivelu, Ponniah & Chinniah were responsible for the system of concert presentation beginning with Alarippu, Jatisvaram, Sabdam, Varnam, Padams, Javali, ~~[illegible]~~ Tillana & Sloka. Speaking of languages I have known these recitals with Hindustani songs & even English notes. The Hindustani songs were always of a cheap variety. But I wish to say that language itself is no barrier but the real barrier is the style of music & whether a language fits the style of music as for example Hindi with South Indian music. ~~[illegible]~~ I have found it jarring to my ears when I have heard such innovations. Kannada, Malayalam, Tamil, Telugu & Sanskrit are perfect for South Indian music which is a part of the Dance. Bharata Natya is really music, music of the Body ~~[illegible]~~ It has been said Natyam Geetham & Vadyam together is music. In this connection I would like to speak about the musical accompaniments. At the time of my learning of the dance I found harmonium & Clarionette used. It is said that vina should be used. Although it is beautiful it cannot be heard well though the mike has solved the problem. I prefer Mukhavina, smaller type of Nagasvaram or Flute. The former is difficult ~~[illegible]~~ to play & so we can ~~[illegible]~~ use flute. Too many instruments & too many varieties like modern orchestras are just as unpleasant as unfortunate varieties of costumes, colours & jewellery. Our performances today are noisy & showy which hides the lack of Art. True Art needs very little to show it off at its best. To ~~[illegible]~~ help all this cheap showyness has also come the mike which is almost a curse of modern civilization. Amongst the many changes that had to be made was also the sign in Singing ~~[illegible]~~. There were so many reforms that had to be made & still has to be made that I will not enumerate them for lack of time & space.

I am saying all this not to speak of myself.

India, even South India, except for a few people, knew that such a great Art existed in this country. Shrimati Gowri Ammal of Mylapore, most wonderful in Abhinaya was my first teacher & with her good will I later learnt from Meenakshi Sundaram Pillay the only Vidwan I have known who had the great tradition of the Ponniah, Chinnaiah, Sivanandam & Vadivelu. Talking of the Sastras he was the only Nattuvanar, who was able to recite in Sanskrit & who had made some study of the Theory or Sastra of the Dance. His musical level was also of a higher degree than was normal at that time. To hear him recite the thirmanams was a joy and over and above all his traditional learning and experience he was open to new ideas and creative. Though I learnt fully all the traditional items and my performances never deviated from the purely classical, I did want to try compositions to other items such as kirtanas of Dikshitar, Thyagaraja, and others. I can say from my experience though occasionally they are suitable because the sentiments are suitable for Abhinaya in general I can say they are not suited to the dance. Kirtanas are generally descriptive and devotional and are not based on the subtleties of human emotions as padas and javalis. Contrary to others. I can say that Pancharatna kirtana like Sadinchane for which I have tried to compose a dance was discarded by me as unsuitable. At the time I was learning dance from Meenakshisundaram Pillay, I was learning music from Papanasam Sivan who taught me the Kirtana of Arunachala Kavi - En Pallikondir Ayya. I wished to dance it & with the help of Meenakshi Sundaram Pillay composed it something like a varnam & this proved a great success. I also wished to dance to Natanam adinar for which my teacher was as willing to try to compose a dance though

At first he was uncertain. It became such success that it has now become a common item everywhere. & yet I can say Rasabhava is best in Padas, Javalis, Varnas, Slokas & so on

I know in the old days great dancers danced to a Tana varna (meant for music concerts), It was always understood and I also fully believe that it can only serve as an occasional item to show technical skill. I have myself lately composed a dance to a Tana varna & though it has been worthwhile, it cannot regularly take the place of a Pada-varna which is composed in slow measure so that the abhinaya in it is fully possible. Unfortunately even this Pada varna is spoilt by nattuvanars & dancers by too much speed. It is more difficult to dance to slow measure unless the dancer is able to maintain the sthayi bhava & this is the reason for the speed. [The varna is an item that contains all elements of the dance, thirmanams (composed of drum syllables or Sollu kattus) Swaras & Sahitya. The abhinaya portion is varied but it does not contain such varieties as a pada does. A pada respresents a nayika or Nayaki bhava in full & varied modes but a varna is a little more limited & most of them are alike in their themes.]

The jatisvaram is usually a song composition with Swaras only starting with a thirmanam. I have been told by Meenakshi Sundaram Pillay that the jatisvaram was almost entirely of Sollu Kattu instead of swaras alone. This may have been the case at one time which would explain the reason why it is called jatisvara.

The Sabda is a well known item in old dance recitals with abhinaya as main & minute thirmanas in between verses - According to my opinion it is the least interesting of Bharata Natya items & unless there is a good creative musician it becomes tiring. The plan of a Bharata Natya solo recital beginning with Alarippu, Jatisvara, Sabda in Varnam, Padam, Javalis, Tillana & Sloka came

into a logical pattern from the times of the four great Composers; Swaminadam, Vadivelu, Chinnaya & Ponniah. ~~After~~ Alarippu which is a form of invocation. Jatisvaram comes with one thirmanam and all adavu to Svaras. The Sabdam with very little nritta & mainly bhava to a skeleton of a musical Compositions. After all this preparation comes the varna in which, Thirmanams, Swaras and Sahitya with abhinaya are all equally important. ~~[illegible]~~ Then comes ~~[illegible]~~ entirely Abhinaya portion ending in the climax of a tillana. The sloka is obviously a devotional item. This is often left out. It must be mentioned here that Tillana is entirely different from jatisvara except very often maiyyadu used to be included in jastivaram also as in tillana. In order to Shorten the programme these have been dropped. A tillana contains, svaras, jatis or Sollukattus Composed as part of the song & most often Sahitya. It is a mistake to say thillanas do not contain Sahitya or words or to say that Consert thillanas were not used for dance performances. They were used & can be used.

Regarding the languages for the dance, my opinion is that it is not a barrier but as the Bharata Natya is a typical South Indian dance and there is no dance outside music it does not suit any other style of music though I would not be averse to trying a composition to a Drupad of the old style.

Bhava, Raga, Tala

Bharata Natya is considered in modern days to be the dance of South India, particularly of the Tanjore school. But the name signifies it to be the dance of Bharata Varsha or India as a whole, though all schools of Indian dance, except the South Indian, have deviated, through the blending of other influences. Even in South India, the dance called Bharata Natya is the particular presentation of the art as given by a single dancer and based on the concert arrangement. This method of presentation came into existence about a hundred years ago during the reign of the Maharashtra Rulers of Tanjore who gave much encouragement to this art. Many other styles have almost, if not entirely, disappeared and they need to be revived and re-created.

There is no doubt that Bharata Natya is a gift of the highest order. In the old days in South India, great musicians studied this art, for it enriched the *Bhava* and *Tala* of their music.

The "*Sangita Ratnakara*" states that dance is essentially an aspect of *Sangita* or music and therefore one finds the same origin, the same essential principles in both the Arts. The musician and the dancer must study the same books which give not only the rules and principles of these arts but also a vision of the vistas of imagery that make Art real. Hardly any dancer of today is learned and even in the immediate past most dancers were not given much general learning. But the of dancers, if they are of a high order, must be learned and must be musicians of real merit of well. It is the lack of study of the dance that narrows down the perception of the dancer and limits the creative spirit. This may sound strange, for many think that the study of the *Sastras*

limit the dancer's imagination. On the contrary, great books such as the *"Bharata Natya Sastra"* and the *"Sangita Ratnakara"* lead you into a world of imagination and reality and make you understand the spirit of Bharata Natya. Natya is derived from the Vedas and is itself a spiritual expression and philosophy of life. There seems hardly any detail that was left out for the dancer to decide. But, when you go beyond a superficial study, you realize that the artist is free; as free as an architect who plans a house, a temple or a city, but within the boundaries and limitations of the landscape with its rivers, forests, and mountains. This dance is equally an architecture that is built within the framework of that spirit of India which is embodied in her arts, her *Sastras*, and her philosophy. But how does freedom come from limitation? Firstly, the very limitation in the *Sastras* of *Sangita* frees you from form. They tell you that *Natya* is an *Avatara* of the Divine Spirit and paint before your eyes the picture of Sri Nataraja Himself, the Cosmic Being who dances as the worlds dance with Him. The highest and most eternal bliss, the joy of the innermost being of man which knows no truth but in joy; this is the essence of the dance. He who has transcended the reign of the emotions and has burnt them to ashes. He who protects all by His divine compassion. He dances like an ordinary mortal. With Him dances Parvati who is part of Him and who is the very incarnation of divine pity and gracious Motherhood, She who is above every woman, every queen, She, too, dances like an ordinary mortal. Is there a greater conception of art anywhere, and is not this conception one that transcends the physical?

With this magnificent picture before us and having lifted our very being into this spirit, India takes us to the next step, the description of the dancer and her sense of dedication to this sacred art, for it is a scripture to those who find religion in beauty, transcending its physical expression, beauty translating the spirit in terms of movement.

The learned authors of the *Sastra* knew that essentially form and sound are one and so laid down *Bhava*, *Raga*, and *Tala* as the three great essentials of dance as well as music. The heart of all expression is the feeling from which it

springs and so *Rasa* as feeling, with all its manifestations, is also the heart of the dance and is so subtle in its essence that the expression of it is not something that can be learnt from a teacher but has to come from the maturing of a gift with which the dancer herself is endowed. In these days, only South India lays emphasis on this aspect of the dance. In South India no dancer, however skilled, however young and beautiful, is appreciated for long unless her art is so enriched.

In *Natya Sastra* all components which make up the dance; the movements of the body, the expression, the rhythm and overall presentation on stage are codified and laid down as a grammar for the dancer to learn and master. After mastering this basic grammar the dancer becomes proficient to convey the nuances of a beautiful literature. Only after such mastery and inner meditation can a dancer reach the sublime heights for which this art was created.

Raga is melody and is necessary to every form of dancing and *Tala* is rhythm or time. *Tala* is also necessary to all forms of dancing, but is specially emphasized in all its *intricacies* in *Nritta* which is physically the most difficult part of the dance. Bharata Natya of the Tanjore School excels in *Nritta*. Even in South India there are different schools in which there are variations of technique, where the *Adavus* or basic steps are different. A *Nattuvanar* or dance teacher must be an expert in the *Tala* aspect of music in order to compose dances that are beautiful in rhythm. Dances that are composed to *Swaras* and to drum syllables, called *Tirmanams* in South India and *Bols* in North India, are extremely beautiful but are difficult to execute perfectly. There are *Tirmanams* to all the thirty-five *Talas*, although in these days very few people use them all. The equipment of the dance teacher consisted of a knowledge of music in all its intricacies, the *Talas* and the practice of the dance itself. He also had a knowledge of the *Sastras,* a capacity to play the different musical instruments used in the dance as well as the ability to be a good singer. He was like the conductor of an orchestra and without him no dance could take place. Every dancer was also dependant on him to conduct a recital, for he had to say the *Tirmanams* in a particular way and to play the bell metal cymbals according to the composition and steps of the dance.

The *Sastras* have clearly laid down even the type of instruments and the

number to be used, but in latter years the accompanying music consisted of the Drum and the Clarionet and sometimes the Violin, over and above the vocal music. The Clarionet is most unsuitable instrument of foreign origin and during the last few years the Flute has taken its place. The Violin, though foreign, has been beautifully adapted by South Indian musicians but it is obvious that in the very olden days the Sarangi was the stringed instrument even of South India and this would be far more suitable for dance accompaniments. Unfortunately hardly any South Indian musician is able to play it.

Bharata Natya is a *Sadhana* which requires total devotion. This means many years of study. Till lately, the dancers of South India were all temple dancers and belonged to a particular caste. But there were many fine geniuses among them, some who have shone brilliantly in *Abhinaya* and singing. Their service to this art was for an entire lifetime. They began their career of dancing very young and continued till they were even seventy years of age, inspiring audiences. This again proves the freedom from physical attributes and emphasis on spirit which is considered important in a dancer. With maturity of expression even the age of a dancer ceases to matter. The physical form disappears when the spirit is true and sublime.

The art of Bharata Natya, shows that its greatest message is its teaching, the teaching of a philosophy of life, the teaching of great truths through the portrayal of the lives of the Great ones, through the compositions of those who were inspired, the blending of limbs and movements to music, and the lifting of the emotions through voice and gesture to the One Being to Whom you dance.

This was, and is, the eternal spirit of the dance, but in Bharata Natya this high level was not maintained. Out of the nine *rasas* to be expressed *sringara* became predominant. *Sringara* or love can be portrayed in its most beautiful aspect, as I am sure, for example, was meant by the great Kshetragna whose songs are among the most beautiful ever composed for the dance. At the same time *sringara* can become coarse and vulgar. India's gift is spirituality and when some dancers forsook the ideal of dancing to the Deity in the temple and began to dance to the ruler or patron, then the dance became personal and

gradually deteriorated to such an extent that it came to be considered a degrading thing to see or to learn.

In the days of the Chola Kings all arts flourished and the greatest dancers and musicians were encouraged and respected by the rulers. Artists were never in want, but in latter days and even today art has become commercial and artists have to adapt themselves to the problem of earning a livelihood. Taste has changed, so that cheap art has become expensive and good art is starved of interest. Until the ancient spirit is revived, until great artists are encouraged by the State, we cannot expect the pervading of true culture which alone is the link between the higher and the lower worlds. Among the greatest gifts of the world is Bharata Natya, for this dance is not merely for audiences, a mere entertainment, but is an offering to the Highest.

- *All India Radio, Madras, 17.05.1948*

Bharata Natya, The Complete Art

The most important qualification for understanding art is intuition. Art can never be put down on paper. You cannot measure beauty. Especially in the dance a very important feature is, first the use of the body, and secondly the transcending of the body. Because of this, of all the arts, dance is in a way the most difficult, because it is expressed through the body, and that body has to create a feeling that the dance is beyond the body. Therefore it is not enough to know only the movements of the body. If the inner attitude is not right, if it tends to the physical side, it is wrong. We must show the spiritual aspect in the dance, because all our arts in India are spiritual, and if dance is not spiritual, it is not art at all, and it is not India either.

We must be able to distinguish between real and unreal dance. Real dance is not the easiest of arts. But in the dances of unreality, that are learnt and shown, you are given all kinds of dresses, and shown many tricks that deceive the ignorant public. What are the things necessary for us if we are to become a dancer?.

First of all, right attitude. Let us be like Nataraja Himself, who is said to have burnt to ashes his lower self and reached the higher self. If we are interested in Art, we must also burn to ashes our lower selves. Dance is considered the dance of happiness, which has got many moods, sentiments, emotions, which shows all that belongs to life, but shows it divinely, and shows it as if it has transcended life. That is why dance is so wonderful. Essentially it is *Ananda*, Joy, Happiness. I know for myself that the real *Natya* is *Ananda*, the *Ananda* of the higher self, not the lower self. For a dancer, real understanding of all that the dance stands for is necessary.

How few concert singers, how few dancers, how few artists even think of these ideals before their performances. So often there dominates the desire to pander to the lower desires of humanity. So often, especially in the dancing world, is there cruelty in the training of the artist. How can such artists even express the joy which is the essence of dancing when there has been no joy during their childhood days? How can a flower blossom into beauty when it is beaten and threatened unless and until it blossom. The mechanical dance we see in modern times is a result of the crushing of the soul by which method the ignorant imagine they can express joy.

The whole of Hinduism is devoted to the concept of *Dharma*; there is no place on earth or aspect of life where there is no *Dharma*. So there is as much *Dharma* for the stage as there is off the stage. There are some *Dharmas* which are useful for the stage, because the stage is a representation of life. In fact life itself is a continuous drama. Shakespeare has said that all the world is a stage, and all the men and women merely players. What does drama do to a person?. It takes the very essence of life and puts it before the audience and so enables one to understand life far better. In drama you not only see something, apart from yourself, but you actually see yourself on the stage.

We should also understand that there are some aspects of the world which are suitable for the stage; and some aspects of the world which are unsuitable for the stage. These aspects have been clearly explained by the *Sastras*. In representing life through the dance one often hears the words *Lokadharmi* (representation of the real) and *Natyadharmi* (conceptual representation). When I think of *Lokadharmi* one remarkable fact strikes me. In Bharata Natya, if you want, for example, to describe, say, Krishna and the Gopis, you describe an ordinary individual going and milking the cows, and playing and doing ordinary things that naughty children at home do. You describe the Gopis going where Sri Krishna is, you see them with the pots on their heads; you see them milking the cows; you see them boiling the milk and preparing curds, and then preparing butter, and Krishna stealing that butter and running away. This is a common theme. It is definitely of the world, of the *Loka* and yet it is remarkably suitable for the stage. The *Lokadharma* of the past or

the *Lokadharma* of the villages which still exists in parts of India, is suitable for the stage, but the *Lokadharma* of the present is unsuitable for the stage today, especially in Bharata Natya. So what happens is that the *Lokadharma* or realism of the past has now become purely *Natyadharma*. What is *Lokadharma* today cannot be *Lokadharma* on stage because certain things of the world are impossible to convey in dance.

In ancient days, life itself was so beautiful that it could be translated on to the stage. Probably the movements were exaggerated; perhaps they were made a little artificial. Perhaps they were made very much more beautiful than the ordinary people were able to express, but it was fit for the stage. Indian people appreciated nature very much, and they were nearer to nature in olden days. As long as we are close to nature, we are nearer to art and we are also nearer to dance. Another thing which I want you to think about is the depiction of reality and the role of realism in the dance. People often want to create something exactly as they see it. Now to translate something on to the stage is not by merely copying. For example, let us take the ballet SWAN DANCE as danced by the very great dancer Anna Pavlova. Among all the performances she gave, the most famous dance was the Swan Dance. She never wore feathers for this dance nor did she portray the noises of swans. The dance itself was simple and not at all difficult to do. It was not intricate and did not require the virtuosity of a great dancer. But today in the West no ballet dancer ever attempts that Swan dance because they feel that after Pavlova's rendering of that dance nobody could do it on her level. That great dancer had given that ballet something of her own imagination and something that came from a deep inspiration. Now in India if dancers had to do that dance they would put on feathers, swan's feathers if they could possibly get them!. This literalness in art is one of the things that kills the art. It not only kills beauty but brings ugliness also.

The dancer has to dance with his body, but suppose he wants to express the nature of an animal or a bird, say a peacock or a swan, how does he do it?. It is really like Yoga for he gets into the inner consciousness of the bird and is at one with it - what is called the fourth dimensional consciousness, which is really the fire consciousness. The dancer goes into the consciousness of the peacock and

becomes the spirit of the peacock himself and that oneness of consciousness produces the right result. When the union of consciousness is really true then through the dance we can portray everything. In showing the deer with your hands and your whole self you are showing the "deer-ness" which is the spirit of the deer. This teaches you that you can never interpret beauty except by entering into the consciousness. Imagination alone is not sufficient. It is difficult to just imagine a good deer and portray it in dance without entering into its consciousness.

How are we to show for example a swan in dance. The only way to dance the swan is to feel like the swan yourself, to give the impression of the swan so that the audience can clearly perceive the swan in you. Like Yoga it cannot be done without concentration. I have come to the conclusion that the only way to present nature in dancing is to understand the fourth dimension of so-called reality. It is not the three dimensional peacock, it is not the swan or the deer which you must portray. It is the "peacockness", the essence of the peacock or "swanness" of the swan. In Kathakali, the dancers represent things from nature. In fact their dance is richer for the expression of nature than Bharata Natya as it is presented these days. In Bharata Natya an individual dancer is the story teller. She is Krishna one minute; she is Radha in another. She is Rama one time and Siva in another. You have to become the object which you are portraying. In Bharata Natya, you have to become everything except yourself, because you are the story-teller. Your job is to dance well, to create well, to look nice also on the stage, in order that you may create in the hearts of the people who are watching you, that very same emotion which you are expressing. In Kathakali it is more like a drama. Each individual has a part, each individual is doing something which expresses his action. There is a realistic expression of nature; For example you find a Garuda with a very large nose in imitation of a beak. But you cannot make this realistic representation in Bharata Natya.

Let us now go into the essential principles of the dance. In the Natya Sastra there is a description of how a dancer should look; what her age should be; what her build should be etc. I have a very rarely seen a dancer who has all

these qualifications. No doubt that is the ideal, but is it possible for us all to achieve that ideal? We cannot do it. But it is an ideal worth thinking about.

Another important thing in dancing is the movement of the eye. There is a *sloka* describing how the eye should be used. The eye should go wherever the hand goes because only through the eye you express yourself and create in people the most real impression. Whatever you may do with your hands, whatever you may do with your feet, whatever you may do with your body, if your eye is not expressing it then the art is lost. We do not achieve the result that we want. There is another *sloka* on the movements of the head. These are all important for the different expressions of the dance. In the *Alarippu*, which is the opening invocation dance, what is the very first thing? The movement of the eyes, the movement of the neck the movement of the arms, the movement of the feet and then the movement of the whole body. So you take the movement right from your head down to your feet. That is really what *Alarippu* is. A flowering of the body. An art critic once said: "There are two flowers (*Poos*) which are the most beautiful in the world. One is the *Tamaraippu*, (Lotus), and the other is the *Alarippu*!". Dance is the offering of your *angas* and *upangas* to the Divine Mother because the body is the temple of dance. I consider dance as a consecration.

All the gestures of the dance are expressive of ideas. From time to time people have invented new gestures to express new ideas. However, I hope that new gestures will not be made to represent this present material world of money, motorcars, horns, jazz. If you depart from the purely imaginative, the mystical, the religious, you depart from the very spirit of the Indian dance. The true artist inspires because he himself is inspired.

Dancing is an art, an art with a technique. Yet it is more than that technique. You need the technical expression to show the life, and yet having shown it, you afterwards must throw it away in order to show the life.

One of the most wonderful things about dance is, that unless you yourself enjoy the dance, the audience cannot enjoy it. That is why I advocate temple dance,

which is spiritual, and it is only out of pity and compassion that we allow the audience also to see and enjoy our dance! The emotion of the dancer has got to go through that process of enjoyment and response, and then only can it give enjoyment to others. Imagine how difficult this is, and still people think that dance is very easy!

Some would be dancers want to go straight into *abhinaya*, the full expression of the emotions. But it is only possible to dance *abhinaya* after years of hard work in *nritta,* or pure rhythm which represents joy. If you are not healthy, if your leg is aching, you will tend to show the opposite. Therefore you have to learn to transcend even pain, and show the divine joy of the dance and when you learn this *nritta* it is in itself an introduction to the performance of *abhinaya.*

Next we come to the depiction of emotions. Now-a-days gods are described as if they were human beings, and human beings as if they were Gods. When I began to learn dancing, I thought ancient kings must have really been divine; but when later I saw some of these Rajas who were substituted for the Gods and heroes of old, I had a sad disappointment! When we have love songs in Bharata Natya, they transcend human feelings. We have the description of the love of Radha and Krishna which represents spiritual love. But in the degraded local versions they describe not Krishna but a Raja. This is very sad indeed.

After this, comes costume. Look at the remarkable things that people are doing with costume these days. Costume must reflect the spirit and sentiment of the dance itself. Instead of this they wear weird costumes.

I believe in ancient art, but I do not believe in the degenerated immediate ancient. I have seen examples of the true muslim culture, and of the true western culture, with their beautiful ornaments, and these were long before the days of Hollywood. Today, everybody wants to make their faces white, and the contrast between these and their dark arms is most inartistic. When we dance we must look beautiful but it must be according to the simplest expression and according to our Indian ideals.

I have had much difficulty in creating costumes. The dancer has to look nice, as well as to feel comfortable and I can tell you that it is not very easy to attain

this end. In Bharata Natya you have got to have the strongest dress. In Bharata Natya jewels fall, ornaments break and such other things happen. After every dance performance, one has to visit the tailor and the jeweller! The ideal of creating a costume or the ideal make-up is such, that one must never look as if they have been made-up. When you dress, you must not look as if you had dressed up, you must look natural. Many people do not know how to do this and they merely copy.

Now you know how important a stage is. In these days it is not easy to dance in the temples; so we have got to imagine that the stage is our temple. We must have simplicity. People have no idea how important simplicity is, and I am not speaking merely of make-up, or dress. People wear so many jewels that the attention of the audience is diverted from the dancers eyes. On the top of this there are the coloured lights; suddenly a green light; suddenly a red light; then a blue and then a white light which shows up all the lines of the make-up. People have an awful craze for variety. I do not understand this.

Another important thing is, that when a dance is created by inspiration, one never gets tired of it. Anything that is a real is never tiring. This we know by experience. We know that we are never tired of things that are creative. We realise that dance is after all not so easy and in order to create very often people these days force themselves into queer actions. For instance, when some dancers want to show the peacock dance they put on peacock feathers, instead of showing the spirit of the peacock.

India is a land of art and beauty, but more than that, it is land of Yogis. This is that which we must understand, and we have to learn to open our eyes, and we have to learn to open our ears, and we have to learn to develop our five senses. We have to do it impersonally, with devotion and with courage, because without these three things we shall never be able to achieve anything.

It is impossible to dance (according to ancient Hindu ideals) the dance of Parvati or Vishnu if the dancer does not believe in them. She can dance the form which is bound to be a sacrilege but not the life. A great dancer's art must depend first on the life she or he can express, secondly, upon the beauty

of technique and only lastly on stage arrangements, costumes, etc., These must be as ornaments, not essential in themselves. If the dance is true and beautiful it cannot lose by the absence of these though it can be enriched by them. Bharata Natya is an art which is complete and it is remarkable how every detail of form has been thought out in detail so that its technique may be a perfect instrument of the genius of the dancer. Without a perfect knowledge of music it is impossible to be a perfect dancer. And no dancer can be great without the power of dramatic expression which is displayed by the body and particularly the face. This only goes to prove that in India, skill in action was of a high order and it was not sacrificed for the sake of the spirit. Yet such an artist can afford to do very little because even a very simple gesture can be potent with meaning and power. The magic of genius is the highest magic of all. Though form, technique and skill are essential, they can never be sufficient if art is to become an inspiring force in the world.

– Lecture at Kalakshetra

Rasanubhava

Dance is a unique art which has always had a high place in the history of almost every country. Many questions arise in one's mind when one thinks of the Dance. Is it an art meant to give joy to the onlookers? Is it a hobby? Is it a study and an aspect of learning? Or, is it meant only as an outlet for the dancer's desire for rhythmic expression?

In every nation these questions are answered differently. One has, however, to realise that the very rhythm and grace of bodily movements which so subtly co-ordinate with music, are a natural expression for all humanity. There are many who can enjoy witnessing such expressions of rhythm and joy; but I think most would say that, granted the necessary natural gifts, if would be far preferable to be a creative artist oneself. The desire to express the joy of rhythm that human beings have takes the form of the dance, which is divinity trying to find release even through the coarsest matter, the physical body. This divine life changes its purpose and is expressed according to the development of the individual and the Nation. Except among the purest classical dancers, the body is the chief instrument of ugliness masquerading as beauty. In the music halls, night clubs and a number of other entertainments in the west, not only is the dance degraded but womanhood as well. Where this happens, there is bound to be a general decay of civilization. Hence war and the other evils of civilization. In India the ancient spirit still persists and there is a vast majority who cannot respond to such exploitations of the physical as the West can.

In ancient India the dance had the highest conception of beauty. It found place in every happy occasion of life. It was regarded as the greatest and most beautiful gift through which the message of the highest spiritual life could be expressed. The

Divine being Nataraja, is Himself a dancer; and so is His consort Parvati as also Sri Krishna who danced in Brindavan. Nowhere, except in India, is there so perfect a system of dancing and it is marvellous to see how no detail of expression is left out. In fact it will take many years of research and work before we can attain even a small portion of the achievements laid down in the Bharata Natya Sastra for a full study of the dance. The more one studies, the more one realises what an ocean of learning it is. The dance gestures or *abhinaya* (expression) with the *mudras*, or language of the hands, dancing to songs, and the meaning of the words contained therein, are yet undiscovered elsewhere, while in India it is already some thousands of years old. One also sees how in the past such accomplishments of the average people were of a very high order. In Java, dance is not merely an expression of the cultural background of the nation but a great accomplishment and an ornament to individuals as well. In Western countries, the classical dance, such as the ballet, was and is still among the best people, not only an accomplishment, not merely a national achievement, but a mission. The entire lives of dancers of the ballet revolve round the perfecting of themselves not only in technique, which is most difficult, but in improving their art and its message day by day. Great dancers like Anna Pavlova were obviously messengers of beauty. The rigorous work, the complete subjugation of all other personal desires and pleasures, the abandonment of one's being to the cause, are very similar to the great learned artists, musicians and pandits of India. They lived only for their art; everything else took second place. In all centuries this attitude belongs to the few. To the majority, dance is an expression of their simple joys of life, through folk dancing as one finds particularly among the peasant people both in the West and in India. This can also be a great contribution to the nation; for, though such dancers may not be individually great artists, the collective atmosphere creates beauty and grace to the country and helps individuals to express their emotions. Not everyone is blessed by the Gods in having the gifts that a dancer must possess and therefore group dancing, which can be simple, beautiful and inspiring, is bound to bring new life and expression of joy particularly in these days of gloom. A human being is composed of the body, the emotions, the intellect and the cosmic self. The dance can contribute both to the sensitive and to the negative, to the beautiful and the ugly side of human beings.

The dance is an expression by the physical body. Because it is a physical expression it is both a dangerous and a magnificent instrument. The weakness of the physical body is its coarseness and vulgarity. For those who in their minds and emotions are unable to transcend the physical, the dance can become an instrument of sensuality and coarseness. But, on the other hand, for those who have a deeper knowledge, the body can fulfil its highest *Dharma* not only by giving to the world an expression of physical grace and beauty, but can convey *Rasanubhava* an embodiment, an expression of the Cosmic Being. Therefore it is that emotion has a very high place in the dance, for emotion directs the message of grace and rhythm. In Bharata Natya, *Bhava* is considered the heart of the art. Many consider *Bhava* merely as the ability to portray human emotions. This is true, but Bhava is more. It is the essence of intellect as well, and there is *Bhava* as much in *Nritta* (pure rhythm) as in *Abhinaya* (expression). People often think that the *Tillana* or *Tirmanams* with *Adavus* and intricate foot work, are an aspect of *laya* or *tala*, and therefore bear no relation to *Bhava*. In reality, there is the *bhava* of the body as much as of the face, the expression of music and emotion through rhythm. In order to accomplish this perfect blending of the body, the emotions and the intellect, there yet is needed knowledge, a knowledge not only of the books which in India are unique, but also a knowledge of the great philosophies, literature, poetry, music and religion, a knowledge by which the mind transcends itself in the world of wisdom. When this is achieved, Bharata Natya is justified by the dancer, and it becomes a perfect expression of the essence or *Rasa* of the Divine. The dance becomes a *Veda* and the dancer a *Yogi*.

Of course the essential element of the dance is joy, the inner bliss which is a deep experience, not an outer happiness. This is where the conception of the dance differs in the West. Great ballet dancers have one-pointed devotion to their art, good taste, imagination, perfect technique and a sense of subtle and pure beauty; but their idea of *bhava* is developed only to the extent of the *bhava* of the body. The higher emotion and intellect are not known. In every plane of consciousness the dancer can bring joy, but from the Indian point of view it involves the complete control of the mind, the emotions and the body.

The dance is also an art, which, like the drama, can unite other visual arts. It can be a vehicle for learning sense of colour and line, music with its subdivisions of *bhava, raga* and *tala*, the art of the stage, make-up etc. When one enters into the true world of the dance, one comes to realise that there is no place in it for vulgarity or cruelty, which unfortunately find their place in the world of art everywhere. There is a tendency on the part of some teachers who are notable exponents of dance to force their knowledge on others, particularly children who are cruelly treated for the sake of learning something which has not become an experience for them. It is an art which needs gentle flowering with maturity of years. Such harshness while teaching is bound to have its repercussions resulting in the dying out of the art.

The dance, being an expression of the body, has been particularly exploited in this respect. It is unfortunate that it should have descended to the lowest level in our country which has been the home of the great and the spiritual. Dance is an art which is transitory and cannot leave living memorials like other more permanent expressions of art such as painting, sculpture, architecture, etc. But through the sculpture in temples, one can get a glimpse of the spirit of the dance as it was in India.

The dance, as I have tried to point out, may be an accomplishment, a hobby or an entertainment, but whatever it is, it has a noble purpose so wonderfully understood by the great *Rishis* of India. I hold that India can teach the world that true dance is an art which, like the white light of the Sun, draws into itself the rainbow of other arts, and which as an art can be one of the greatest expressions of the human spirit. Dance transcends the physical with the body as the vehicle, and lifts humanity to a world of the higher emotion of joy, pure intellect and wisdom. It is an art for the musician, the poet and the philosopher alike, and for those who understand this, it becomes a great inspiration which will lift humanity to wondrous heights.

– Lecture to students, Kalakshetra

The Deva of Movement

The Dance is a philosophy in itself and many learned scholars have said that through the dance can come *moksha* or salvation both to the audience and to the dancer, if they are properly tuned to it. Though this many sound very exaggerated to many who know only the modern dance, it is my own experience that there comes a moment during doing dance a revelation and a spiritual light as great as through any worship in a Temple or Church.

I feel that in India art has always been impersonal, and that it has never been for the onlooker either to praise or to criticize, but merely to feel. In modern days unfortunately art has become merely a matter of fame. There are many true and great artists who are old-fashioned, who belong to the village, and who are still unconscious of publicity or fame, and there is something very spiritual and simple in that one-pointed devotion to art a devotion which is not concerned with the outside world.

It is also sad that combined with the revival of interest in the arts has come a very grave menace to India - the danger of ugliness masquerading as Beauty. Perhaps people do not know enough about art, particularly the dance, to be able to distinguish the real from the unreal, for anyone with even a few month's learning and with very little knowledge, by the aid of costumes and orchestra, is able to win an audience.

Besides real knowledge of the dance, belief, is a most essential requisite for the dancer. It is no use to dance on the themes of Gods and Goddesses. I know that this is a point with which many people will not agree, but there is a certain something a dancer can produce when he or she believes, which is never possible otherwise.

Bharata Natya in South India has been degraded not so much by the professional dancer but mostly by the audiences who were willing to encourage vulgarity. However the dance itself is such, and its form is such, that in the hands of the right person, it can easily assume its rightful and original place.

I have seen practically all types of dance throughout India, but the classic style, the beauty, the dignity, and the obvious grandeur of Bharata Natya, in my opinion, cannot be equaled by what I might call its daughters. While every form of dance, whether it be folk, semi-classical, or classical, must have a place in the nation, just as there must be a place for all types of people, Bharata Natya is satisfying to every type of person. Yet it must be emphasized that its technique is difficult, and I feel Bharata Natya is meant only for the few to learn, as it needs many qualifications before the dancer can really be called an artist and not a mere technician.

Few dancers know the true meaning of the *hastas, mandalas*, etc., but learn the poses for the sake of effect. Like everything in ancient Indian art and science, every detail is thought out, every detail is well conceived, every detail has a place and meaning. Just as the ancient South Indian bronzes were made to the correct proportion according to the *Agama Sastra*, written for the help of those who wished to attain the best results, so were rules and regulations made for the position of the body and the *hastas* in Bharata Natya. In modern days sculptors are copying these bronzes, and attempting to follow the Sastras, but they are not able to produce the beauty that was achieved by the artists of ancient days, because though they follow the rules, they have lost the spirit. Rules in themselves are not enough. Words are not enough. Knowledge is not enough. There must be a spirit which one might almost call "a Deva of Movement." This spirit is intangible and can never be described, as nothing great in the world can be described. But this spirit is most easily and profoundly available through the art of Bharata Natya when it is properly conquered and understood.

Bharata Natya is obviously an art meant for the temple. It is surprising to feel the perfect harmony between the temple architecture, the sculptures,

the temple dance-Bharata Natya, and the temple music like the "Nagaswaram".

India was never a land where the arts were separated from life. The arts were taken from life and life was given by the arts. This is a very important principle that should always be remembered by those artists who desire a renaissance in the arts. In my own School and Art Centre, Kalakshetra, I very specially emphasize this Indian spirit in which the daily life and mind of the dancer or artist is consecrated to the Highest, in which the artist will think of no reward, or of public opinion. Public opinion changes from time to time while true art never changes. I am more interested in making artists than in creating technicians, though it can never be possible to produce many great geniuses. In this same spirit in Kalakshetra we have classes in literature, in drama, in music, in sculpture, in art, in Kathakali and Bharata Natya, for I feel that no artist can ever be a fine one unless he or she learns more than the one art in which he is most deeply interested. A background in which the emotions and the mind expand and become cultured will directly affect the art. Therefore, there is needed a profound knowledge of literature in the student's mother-tongue, in English, which is the language of communication. They need to be well versed particularly in Sanskrit, for Sanskrit gives an atmosphere which is unique and essential for all arts. So it also opens the doors for a deeper knowledge. Dance pupils must have a general education, as well as a knowledge of the stage, of the costume, of colour, lighting etc.

How sad it is that in these modern days people treat the dance so lightly that they think anyone can learn to dance in a few months. If a chemist is not allowed to compound medicines without full knowledge and experience, how can a dancer manage with a mere smattering of knowledge? While no scientist will be respected unless he has a good knowledge of his subject, it seems as if any dancer can acquire a reputation purely by showmanship and advertisement. There are many fields of art by which India can be very strongly influenced - surely the cinema is one. We often look upon Indian art with the eyes of the westerner, for our ideas of adapting art to modern conditions are so varied. An Indian who dances in the West and becomes famous in foreign countries becomes

much more famous in India. However famous the artist is in a village, he is never fashionable in India until he makes one visit to America and is acclaimed by the American press. We at once put him on a pedestal. It is really strange that we cannot see beauty for ourselves.

I find that many people ask me whether I believe in the proper blending of many forms of the Indian dance. On principle I am opposed to it. I do not say that this is impossible, but I do say that those who have attempted to blend the various types of dance have, so far as I have seen, have blended them with poor knowledge of each system rather than because they know it fully.

Each dance-form has its own special and unique emphasis. For example, though Kathakali greatly resembles Bharata Natya in the *hastas* Kathakali is *Natya* or Dance Drama in which various dancers take the different parts of the drama. It emphasizes *Abhinaya*, but its emotions are portrayed in conventional facial expressions achieved through very clever muscular training. In Bharata Natya, the dancer is the story-teller who portrays the many characters, and their emotions through expression. Therefore were the Bharata Natya dancer to have little feeling it would be most difficult for her to be expert at *Abhinaya*, and if she has no feeling there can be no *Abhinaya* at all. So even with so many likenesses, it is difficult to blend the arts of Bharata Natya and Kathakali.

I know definitely, so far as these two dance forms are concerned, many modern dancers, after seeing one or two performances, carry away an impression of one or two movements that they like and then they incorporate them in their own dances without fully learning the best way of expressing those movements. To those who have specialized in any of the arts, the result comes as a shock. Many Manipuri teachers of the dance have expressed the same opinion. To each exponent of a dance-form such mutilation of his art, introduced for the sake of building up what is called the "modern dance" is a sacrilege.

Is the modern dance to be created purely from lack of knowledge and a blending of the ugly, or is it to be the result of a deep and life-long study and experience, with a wise-blending, if there is to be a blending at all? In my own

dancing there are certain expressions which I have changed - I have attempted to create a costume and stage-setting which is both simple and direct; I have introduced many great and beautiful songs of South India which had never in the past been used as themes for the dance. But I have tried to do this in the spirit of India and her glorious traditions, so that I could go further along that road towards which the great sages of ancient India have pointed. True choreography is like a hymn to the Devas of Movement which raises ordinary mortals to sublime heights.

– Field Club, Bombay on 30.04.1941

Indian Dance Today

Today, the dance has become so important in our national life that it is essential for us to know more about it both for the sake of the art and for our own sakes as well. While folk dancing is meant for all to participate in and to find pleasure, the classical dance is learnt only by a select few though appreciated by many. In each part of India, the classical dance has had a special place in the consciousness of the people. With a few exceptions, the dance, wherever it was, sprang from one fundamental attitude and was invested with an atmosphere of sacredness. A notable exception is the Kathak style which, in the Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan especially, was nurtured and flourished in the courts of the rulers. Great exponents of this school delighted people with a supreme mastery of technique. The songs for the dance were indeed on Radha and Krishna or similar themes but the quality and tone of the art were of the court rather than of the temple.

The highly specialised technique entirely used for solo dancing could be appreciated only by a few and the musical accompaniment in itself had no special significance or meaning to large audiences. In contrast we have Kathakali where the stories contained in the Ramayana, Mahabharata or the Bhagavata are composed into plays and sung in exquisite language for the dancers to enact. These songs in the language of the people are understood in the main by every one and Kathakali is suited more for dance dramas than for solo performances. This is why Kathakali is such an important feature of the countryside of Kerala. Religious stories alone appeal to our people. We find the same spirit repeated in other parts of India as in Assam and Orissa where also the dance belongs basically to the temple and has its origin in religious narrative.

Bharatanatyam has played an important part in the cultural and religious life

of the Canarese, the Andhra and the Tamil parts of South India. In all these areas, there were dance dramas composed in the classical style and the music of these dance dramas was well known to the people. All this has gone through a complete change. Today Bharatanatyam is known all over India. The interest in it has become so widespread that it is almost impossible to direct the enthusiasm which has been aroused towards quality rather than quantity. Girls and boys from all strata of society and belonging to all religions now learn the dance. But the fact must be borne in mind that this art arose out of a religious impulse and a very high place was given to it in the Hindu *Sastras* and sacred books. The *Hastas*, the postures and movements were conceived in order fully to represent themes connected with Hindu epics, philosophical ideas and the subtle efflorescence of Indian culture. The grammar of the art, if one may use such a phrase, lies not only in the movements but in the scheme of the *Rasas*. The emotions expressed are both human and superhuman.

In Hinduism, the difference between gods and men is not trenchant and their vital relationships are often intimate. Gods have a human quality and men are often divine. The underlying concept is that of the life, the divinity that is inherent in all, whether they be superhuman, human or subhuman. It is this outlook and background that has given to all Indian art that spiritual vitality rooted in eternal life which continues to inspire men from age to age. It is on account of this outlook that there is a special quality in Indian art.

Our national genius has been based on our faith in eternal values recognising at the same time, the transitory nature of all phenomena. However, it was also recognised that the transitory had the same importance as the eternal, that the two were one and the same. It was only through the transitory that the coarse matter of which we are made could be transmitted into the exquisite realms of beauty and spirituality. It is very important to understand this point of view before we can understand Indian dance whether of today or yesterday because it is the attitude of the mind and heart that creates our environment and our civilization.

If we apply this principle to our present civilization we can easily understand what has happened to our art. We can trace our mentality through the art which is a product of that mentality. We can see how for some time we have been on the

decline. What a series of foreign invasions have been unable to destroy, we ourselves are destroying. British education destroyed our faith in ourselves but fortunately the British did not attempt to educate all sections of the Indian people. In this alone we must find a blessing in disguise. In the village which escaped such education, we still find the remnants of great art and some great artists. In Indian states under Indian rulers, great traditions of the past were encouraged and sponsored. Now that India is free, the recognition of our art treasures has led us to sponsor, preserve, recreate and encourage our arts and artists. This endeavour has publicised and popularised our arts, particularly the dance. The dance has almost become a passion especially with the intelligentsia. This enthusiasm has even overrun the villages in the form of advertisements, film shows and other means of mass communication. The arts are now practised not as adjuncts to religion, to be displayed on sacred occasions and as very special stage presentations but as everyday entertainments and on almost every occasion.

Bharatanatyam is now perhaps the most popular of the Indian dances and nearly every girl in our country wishes to learn it. It is strange how far and how widely it has spread all over India. It is equally surprising how Bharatanatyam has become almost completely unrecognizable in form as well as in spirit in recent years. In South India, owing to well known reasons, it has unfortunately been prohibited in temples. I must however pay my tribute to the professional dancers, or Devadasis for their devotion to the art as well as for the mastery and grace in their technique which is sadly lacking in present day dancers. The decadence and the vulgarity that crept into the art was as much the fault of society as theirs. The dancers and dance teachers of the time had perhaps some excuse, when they defiled the art, in their miserable economic position. In the present revival, dance is no longer the realm of a professional community but is the possession of the many and is practised by the many. How has this affected the standards of the art today? Are the standards in any way higher than they used to be in the past now when more educated people practise the art? This is the question we must answer. Actually, the answer is obvious. I have already stated that because certain sections of the people were untouched by British education in the old days, a portion at least of our culture has been salvaged. What education we give today has far

outdone whatever the British accomplished in denationalising the young. In the epoch that has gone, westernisation was forced upon us. Now we voluntarily seek it because we do not dare to be ourselves. The slave mentality and the lack of culture which our education thrusts upon us, has so corrupted our taste that we ourselves have become dangers to our culture. The present invasion of India is from within. It has affected our dance, it has affected our womanhood.

Bharatanatyam by its nature is elevating and expressive of the highest feminine principle. It should be a great instrument in the hands of the Indian woman who embodies what is finest in womanhood. Instead, one sees today, girls performing this dance in cabarets and hotels and anywhere else possible. The descent from the temple has indeed been great. The desire for variety has produced innovations in the technique itself which are contrary to the spirit of the dance. These innovations provide entertainment for those who lack culture.

If they provide entertainment, they are incapable of producing any lasting inspiration as they are not based on any inner perception. What are the reasons for the emergence of vulgarity in our country's art? I think this emergence only keeps pace with a general corruption in the national character. This has automatically produced bad taste in the people. If character improves in the home, in schools, in colleges and universities, there will be emphasis on spiritual values and on simpler, therefore more beautiful living. Our art will then have a different quality. Beauty in the home alone produces good taste in all other matters outside the home, on the stage as well as in the auditorium.

I regret to say that even those who are supposed to promote good dance and music lack knowledge and taste to such an extent that they mainly promote vulgarity and cheap art. This has unfortunately become a vicious circle. Many cultural organisations, in order to be in a position to promote art, arrange performances by artists who merely have a box office appeal. In order to encourage good art, they promote bad art thereby defeating their own purpose and doing great harm to our country. I would suggest that Sangita Sabhas and such institutions should arrange performances for smaller audiences than are now catered for and have only what is good. In our country over and above the different types of dance forms such as

Kathakali, Manipuri, Kathak and Bharatanatyam, there is a new type of dance and music which, for want of any other descriptive title, is classified as cinema art. I have no objection to a new type but when in this so called new dance there is no originality at all except in the distortion of pure and classical forms such as Bharatanatyam, I feel unhappy and think it is a tragedy. Such vulgarisation does neither the dance nor the cinema any good.

The Government depends on art institutions and critics for advice on art matters as they have no expert knowledge of their own. This makes these institutions and critics more responsible for the harm that has been done and is being perpetrated. Often the critics are as ignorant as the Government. The only safe way I can see which will lead us out of the present situation is to be uncompromising in our standards and not care for publicity or money. If we cannot obtain money without sponsoring bad art it is better to employ ourselves in some other work.

I cannot understand what has happened to the fathers and mothers of our young girls. At one time they went to the extreme of not allowing them to see the dance, let alone permitting them to learn the art. Today they are willing to use cheap publicity to sponsor the programmes of their daughters. They seek the favour of those who can push them forward. Women should be dedicated ambassadors of the beauty of the spirit. Generally speaking I would like to see more art and less performances in our country. It is sad to see many young girls, even children, on the stage content to win applause without even knowing what they are doing or what they intend to do. It is wonderful that we have this great enthusiasm for the dance but we need steady and hard work to go with it. It makes no difference whether it is North Indian or South Indian, whether the dance is Manipuri, Kathak, Kathakali or Bharatanatyam because fundamentally there are only two types of art - the good and the bad. If our dancers will concentrate on what is genuine and work for perfection rather than popularity, our country will again be able to lift its head up among the nations and be known as a land of culture. No nation can boast of its culture merely by what it shows but only by what it is.

- Article to "Illustrated Weekly of India" 30th July 1959

The Future of Bharatanatya

I have chosen to speak on this subject not so much from the point of view of my learning from different books but that I may give my own view-points on what I have been observing in the world today. What I think about dance, about dance in olden days and what I feel should be the future of this art. All the arts that you have been hearing about are really parts of one source. It is not possible to be an artist and appreciate an art without feeling the spirit of another. You have heard about sculpture, painting and music and now you will hear something about dance and drama.

I feel that the divine spirit that is behind all these arts is one; not only behind these arts but also behind many other arts, the spirit of literature, the spirit of poetry, the spirit of handicrafts, the spirit even of simple ordinary things in the home such as clothes, cooking vessels, the floor decorations and many of the things that go towards enriching life. You cannot say that music is an art that should be heard only at a concert, nor is dancing an art that is meant purely for the stage. All these arts cannot be real unless they become part of life and express the spirit of the times in which the artists live. Many conferences may meet, many conferences may decide, but the spirit of the artist can only be expressed by an art which is his own individual expression. A genius can be a very obstinate person. He does not care what is decided by these conferences. The genius will express himself in his own way. If Sri Tyagaraja were living today, I hope you would not mind my saying so, he would not be concerned by what has been decided in the Oriental Conference. What he would say is "I do not know there is such a thing as an Oriental Conference". Perhaps he would not be rude enough to say that but he would certainly go on unconcernedly in his own way expressing music in his own fashion.

Knowledge is very important. It is necessary to study books in order to know something of what other people have said, but a person who studies must not be a mere repeater of what books have said, but must try to enter into the minds of the persons who wrote the books. And it is this that gives learning, a proper foundation. It is really this particular spirit that can bring a new creative art into the modern world, and form the foundation of future work. It is this spirit which gave birth to creative art and genius in ancient India. And there is no country in the world that had greater genius than India.

Why should we discuss the history of Bharata-Natya, or discuss the music of Sri Tyagaraja, or other great musicians of the past? Why discuss the Ajanta frescoes, the great architecture of the South Indian temples and bronzes when we discuss modern art? Why is there this reference? Why is there discussion about the ancient people of India? It is because we find inspiration in them. Is there quite the same inspiration in modern times? In a few artists there may be, but what about the nation as a whole? Very little. There may be for example beautiful paintings here and there, but look at the appreciation that goes on for ugly paintings. Why? Because the painters are appreciated on account of the fact that they are famous, not because we have understood their paintings. That is the spirit that is prevalent in modern India. When we enter into the subject of the dance we do not really know what is dance. So while we are discussing what the artist should bring into the world, the responsibility of the world is tremendous. The responsibility of the public and the responsibility of the audience is no less. Because the people have to be educated; they have to know what to understand and how to understand. But if I may say so, we are not to have classes merely to read books and say "so and so said this" and "so and so said that, therefore it must be like this or like that". "Somebody did not like it; therefore we do not like it". All this is not going to teach us to appreciate. What is going to teach a proper understanding of the arts is not the re-emphasizing of the technique, the principle and history of art, but the revival of the spirit of art, the revival of the genius, the capacity to be great creative artists ourselves. In other words, we must derive inspiration. It is inspiration that is the source of art.

In the modern world when one goes to dance recitals and dramatic performances,

I often watch the audience even more than the dancers. It is very important to see what they look at, what they appreciate. I find that if there are more colours appearing on the stage while the dancer is giving a dance, it is more appreciated than if there are less colours. "What wonderful colours they are!", people say, but very seldom are they capable of passing critical remarks about the dance itself. Colour scheme is important, stage decoration is important, but they are only adjuncts to the dancer and the dance. It is the art that is important. We need decorations and other embellishments but they merely enhance the beauty of that which is already beautiful and already inspiring. That is how I feel about dancing.

It is also important in the modern world to gain fame. The artist is judged by the publicity he gets through newspaper reports. "So and so has been reported in the newspaper articles" they say. So the newspaper is a very important attribute to art in modern days. Please forgive me if I ask what do these newspapers know about the artist or about art. That is why I say the responsibility of the audience is as great as the responsibility of the artist. The public demands something of the artist which is most often against his conscience. Yet he is asked to satisfy them. How often the public expect great musicians to sing cheap songs. I do not want art to be understood in the sense of popularity. I want art to be kept sacred and great, not popular in the way in which it is meant. People often ask "Please dance something that we can understand". Instead I ask why should they not learn to understand something that I dance to? I do not want India to enter into this spirit of modernised superficiality that is sweeping the world. The approach of the public to classical art must be open and humble.

India has one great gift to make to the world. It is her culture. What is culture? Culture is not a manufactured article, it is not something that can be written about in books. Culture is a spiritual thing, and the spiritual genius of India is the greatest gift that India can give to the world. You cannot dismiss the classical arts as something not for modern times. You may say "It is old fashioned". There is no such thing as fashion. You cannot say that your childhood is old fashioned because it happened a few years ago. For it is only a stage of what you are going to be. Life is continuity. You cannot separate yesterday from today and today from tomorrow.

India is a country which has never understood the meaning of time. India is a country which has had in its consciousness only one thing, that is Eternity, the *Sanatana Dharma*. Eternity is something that belongs to beauty. A person may say "I have seen this dance twice. Why must I see it again?" But the creative artist can do the same thing several times, but each time he feels a freshness and each time he dances the dance it is new to him. Every dancer is really the audience, every audience is really the dancer. There is a lamp burning in your room. Do you feel tired of it because you are seeing it every single day? Can you say the sun is a monotonous thing because you see it every day? If so, then you should never like moonlight because the moon is very monotonous, it comes every single month of the year and shines exactly in the same way. Art if it is real can never be monotonous. Monotony is not a word that can belong to art. It is not a word that can belong to beauty and that is the way I think the great genius of India has understood the message of beauty. They were so much inspired that they had no thought of audience. They were creative artists. They did not even know that they created. They did not say "I am making this wonderful temple because the public demands it". The public may demand but the real artist goes on with his art and his art is an expression of divinity - that same spirit that is uplifted in devotion in a temple, in a mosque, in a church. That same spirit which lifts the man through art to the divine. When divinity is brought down and expressed, that beauty and devotion becomes outgoing, becomes art.

The spirit of the sacredness of art has been one that has been outstanding in ancient times. You will find that wherever you go Indian Art has been deeply inspired. Can you possibly say that those people were monotonous in their Art? If you visit the temples in South India they may be of one type but there is a difference in each one of them, there is variety. You take even the simple ordinary things of every day life. If you want to match a brass lamp you find no two lamps alike, because the artist has created newly each time, and those simple things of beauty and art were made by ordinary uneducated men who were not B.A.'s or M.A.'s. It is the spirit that moved them to express themselves in those ordinary things of beauty. It is this creative spirit that can re-create beauty into modern India, that can bring beauty into the future India.

You take for example the Bharata-Natya dance of India. Everywhere you go you see many forms of dancing. But you find they are in some strange way related. Many people have asked me if I think that these dances have come from Bharata-Natya. I do feel that Bharata-Natya is the mother of all type of Indian dancing. Among all classes of Indian dancing there may be differences in form just as grand-children differ from their grandmother. In the same way, the different forms of dancing have perhaps just taken into themselves the spirit and atmosphere of the place to which they have gone. But I see a relation between them and Bharata-Natya. Bharata-Natya has many unique things to offer. I have studied many forms of Indian dancing also many forms of Western dancing. There is one keynote in Bharata Natya which is unique, as far as I am concerned for it creates and transforms every day things into a message of spirituality to the world. It is impossible to make the Bharata Natya dance as vulgar as you can make other forms of dance. The art remains true, and has been unable to be destroyed because of this spiritual quality. This itself convinces me that it is a form of art which has been given by God. It is not what I would call man-made dance. I would call it God-made dance, because it is not easy to express the spirit of coarseness and vulgarity in it. This is the unique feature of Bharata-Natya. It is also the very essence of South Indian music.

Bharata-Natya, some people say, is derived from South Indian sculpture; There are some people who say sculpture is derived from dance. As far as I am concerned I do not feel that either one or the other is the superior. It is all one. It is remarkable how all the arts blend into one. The temple has always been the centre of learning, the centre from which spiritual impetus has come into the world. That is why I myself am very deeply inspired by the fact that while the "temple dancer" has become a term which is looked down upon, it is not so from my view-point. What is wrong if the dance is dedicated to God? What more can the creative artist do than offer his art to the Great Being. Why should the priest offer himself at His feet? Why do you offer music for worship. Do you not feel that the architect himself has been inspired by the spirit of the temple. I feel as far as the future is concerned that same spirit should come back to India. It is not in cities and among the educated classes you find it. You find it in villages, you find it among the

"uneducated" people. I use the word "uneducated" in inverted commas because I find they are more learned in some ways. Supposing I were to give a dance performance that is absolutely religious and spiritual, I know that my best audience would be among the uneducated and among the women. They are the ones who say afterwards "How inspiring" and "what a change to see this instead of the fashionable dance". That spirit is living in India. Do not think because it does not exist in the educated world it does not exist at all. I think it is a very remarkable symptom that we are in the beginning of a great revival and that we are reviving not something which is dead but something which is living. If it is dead it is impossible to revive it.

You see Greek art. I will not say that the ancient spirit of Greek culture is dead. Greek Art was magnificent and one of the most inspiring expressions of Greek culture. It is still living, but the people have changed. In India the spirit has not changed. Indian people still respond to spiritual things. They respond not only to the bad but also to the good. So response is not totally dead and so long as it is there it can be directed.

We can talk a great deal about art in the modern world but you cannot possibly make art into a show. That again is the spirit of Indian art. Art belongs to life, it does not belong only to the stage. No dancer should really dance to the audience in spirit, though physically she may. The audience should dance with the dancer, and this spiritual idea does not in the least take away from the technique of the art, its science and skill.

In order to be a really beautiful dancer, in order to understand dancing you need to understand the spirit of so many arts. That is why dancing has a very unique place in the future of India. The dancer who does not have some idea of sculpture, the dancer who does not have a sense of painting and of the music, cannot really be a great dancer, because the same spirit that is embodied in dancing is embodied in painting and in the other arts. You certainly must feel the music in order to express the dance, and you must also understand something of the presentation on the stage.

Dance is a very difficult art to master not merely because it has so much to

do with physical movements but because the responsibility of the artist is far greater in this art than in any other. Although dance is an art which is expressed by the physical body, it must be above the physical body. It is so very easy to make dance into a physical art. It is so very easy to somehow introduce into it coarseness of physical movement and vulgarity. In some way the life and emotion of the artist will be revealed in the art itself and that is why I am a great believer that there can be no true art unless the life of the individual in India is changed.

Our life must be changed and the whole approach to art must be changed. If we want to live art, if we want creative genius born today we must change the life in our home, we must change our everyday life, because art is moulded by our actions. Art is the entire background of civilization. It is the expression of your childhood. It is the home in which you have been brought up, where you have been taught to think and feel. Art will express itself in everyday life although you may not want it to do so. Art is subtle. Though it is expressed in some form, it is formless. Art is something, which like air, brings the scent from where it has come, the scent of your aspirations, your goal and the wonderful atmosphere of that which has risen very high in you. And that formless spirit will pervade the form, and it is only when that formless spirit can pervade can there ever be inspiration in art, can there be creative spirit, originality and even morality.

Originality does not really mean always new ideas, nor does it mean that everything you do must be done differently but it means doing the same thing in a new spirit so that each time it is born anew, while you are perhaps repeating the same thing. A great musician can sing the same song one hundred times but every time he sings, he sings differently, because to him each time he sings it appears new. That is the genius of the creative artists. It is that which a great dancer reveals.

This is the message that art can give, and particularly dance. Because, as I have said, dance is the essence of many arts. It is remarkable to see how newly invented forms of dancing have created something which is highly scientific. Dance is a powerful language. You can teach through dance just as you can teach with a book. You can give a message to the audience just as much as you can give by

reciting poetry. Its particular ideas of gestures, of mudras, the language of the hands, the language of the movements of the eyes, the language of the movements of the body can all speak for themselves.

In western countries one of the best form of dancing is the Russian ballet. It has a very high and splendid technique not more difficult than the Bharata-Natya. They are now beginning to think in terms of Bharata-Natya. Our dance is a great revelation to the West. The expression of ideas through face, through eyes and through hands, the systematic physical movement is all absolutely new to them. It is unique to our art and it is an important part of Bharata-Natya.

I heard the other day in Bombay that the public in Bombay would like the dance better if the dancer were to sing rather than to portray feeling through facial expression. Evidently they do have this in much of their dancing. The vivid portrayal of emotions through face is not part of their dance but it is a very important feature of the South Indian dance. But we also have *Vachika Abhinaya*. In Bharata Natya not only must you represent through body movements the spirit of the cosmic reality, through gestures the ideas you desire to convey and through facial expressions the emotion but you also convey through music, through words, what you are dancing. So, it becomes a complete and most perfect art without anything left out.

I am afraid in modern times Bharata Natya is becoming fashionable. This is very dangerous for India. Fashion does not belong to art. We must think once more of this art reflecting the spirit of India in all its creative genius and we must make this art once more a living art.

I am sure everyone who loves culture must enjoy good music, fine dancing. Dance moves the human soul and if it does not, it is not fulfilling one of its functions, one of its important aspects. Every single movement of the dancer must be beautiful and simple. Dance is for the recovery of the spirit and enkindling of joy. This ideal has long ago been emphasised but in the dancing of the modern world we have gone away from that ideal. We have also gone away from the spirit of the temple. No theatre can ever fulfil one tenth of the purpose that a temple can fulfil. But still what you can do is to bring the spirit of the temple into the theatre so that the

audience forget that they are seeing the dance in a very fashionable theatre. They must feel they are sitting in Chidambaram or somewhere in Madura and they must feel the atmosphere of a temple while watching the dance.

Without art, without love of music, we shall be dead. We shall all become cruel human beings, because beauty has a softening influence. Beauty brings harmony into our lives, beauty is unconscious, beauty is subtle. Because it is invisible we are continually being influenced by it. If ugliness comes into our daily life we can only be affected by the spirit of ugliness. And war is the spirit of ugliness. If you ask me why there is a war in the world, I would say because there has been ugliness. The West has been responsible for much of it. I might say today there is so much of science without emotion and intellect without inspiration and this has brought into life vulgarity. Vulgarity has come on the stage, into dance, into music. If you want to take the temperature of the world, of the character of the world, know its art and then you know the world. You can understand India only from the point of view of its art through which it can gain great perfection. Great dancing, great music can bring that into modern India, but we cannot bring it unless we become Indian. Because we cannot be anything else but ourselves. If we try to be anything else but ourselves we cannot be true. We cannot be somebody else's soul in order to express our soul.

Just as the priest gives blessing to the audience feeling himself to be the channel between the Highest and the lowest so also can the artist be a channel though only a few can have the power to do it. Out of the millions of people only a few can be great dancers, only a few can be great composers, but everybody can feel and experience the spirit of art. Everybody can make his every day life into a beautiful thing and that was the spirit of Indian art so that from morning till evening, the home, the kitchen, the drawing-room, the mats on which people sat, the lamps that were being used, even the vessels even the simple dhoties, the saris all combined with the ideal of cleanliness and simplicity which is the essence of Godliness. From these were born a great many arts. This is where our genius must be expressed. We have to find our own genius and this is where the creative spirit has to be born for if we must express the true spirit of India, we must be Indian.

I cannot say much about the technique of dancing. There are many people here who are giving their discourses on the technique. This is what I feel to be the spirit of the technique itself. The dancer must dance to that which is a great inspiration to life and not to the audience. The audience also should not expect the dancer to do what they want but to respect the dancer and in that way will be recreated the spirit of the great and the wonderful. Education of the inner spirit makes us nicer persons, kindlier persons, more beautiful persons.

I feel while we should think about the technique of the art, if the *Mudras* are according to the *Sastras*, whether the movements and gestures are correct, we must also remember it is not the revival of technique alone that we must think about, it is the revival of the spirit which is the foundation. We are building the superstructure not on that foundation but on some other foundation. We are building it somewhere else. We must go back to the original foundation but must not stay there. We must progress and create from this firm foundation. So we shall progress according to the spirit which has been given to the world for the benefit of mankind and only if we can enter into that stream of creative art can India once again achieve her greatness.

- *The Oriental Conference, Tirupati on 22.03.1940.*

Philosophy of Dance

Dance in India is not merely what a historian can describe for it is more than the history of man or of nation. It is the history of the soul of India and therefore an expression both of the manifest and the unmanifest. It is the spirit of man and woman (*Purusha* and *Prakriti*), an expression of evolution of movement, a truly creative force that has been handed down the ages. This embodiment of sound and rhythm creating spiritual poetry is called dance or *natya*. We cannot divorce it from religion and philosophy, for, religion and philosophy are not mere intellectual conceptions nor mere set of rules and regulations. Religion, philosophy and art are all vehicles to reach the inner spirit obtainable to the sage and the saint as to the meanest human being. In each dwells the spirit of the Divine, in each rules the creator, in each , there is never ending longing to attain true happiness or *Moksha*. It is to satisfy and make it possible for all to attain happiness, that the Teaching of the Vedas, the Upanishads as well as Dance and Music exist. Therefore it is possible for each mortal as well as for the Gods to dance, each according to the measure of his understanding but each sharing in the Divine Bliss or *Ananda*. But in India the Dance does not evolve through man and his experimentation. It evolves from above. The first glimpse of the dance comes to us from Siva Himself, a *Yogi* of *Yogis*. He shows us the Cosmic Dance and portrays to us the unity of Being. He demonstrates that the highest *Yoga* is in the complete oneness of body and soul, that this oneness can be attained through dance. This is why dance is called a *Yoga*, not mere physical acrobatics but *Yoga* as a means of achieving unity in consciousness. The Supreme Life dances. From Him vibrates the essence of all sound holding within itself the potency of all possible articulation. To the accompaniment of the thunder of this music He dances. The Cosmic

Rhythm of His dance draws around Him ensouled matter which manifest itself into the variety of this infinite and beautiful universe. Sri Krishna the *Paramatma* dances in Brindavan and the Gopis dance around Him in the *Rasa Leela*. In the rhythm of the dance the *Paramatma* draws to himself the *Jivas* that have separated from Him. In the rhythm of the dance each Gopi discovers Sri Krishna for herself. The *Jiva* knows again the Supreme fount of life from which it originated. This is the origin of dance and our codifier is naturally Bharata a great sage. No one but a Rishi could possibly have brought the Dance of Siva or Nataraja into this world for human beings to comprehend and perform.

It is with this philosophy that the dance traditions of India developed. We should remember that the unity of all true art has been stressed in India from the earliest beginning. Thus we find that the *Natya Sastra* of Bharata, the earliest among the Indian books on aesthetics that has come down to us, concerns itself not only with *Natya* as such, but with Music, Poetry, Drama, Theatre, Architecture, and with a general, consistent theory of aesthetics. What was creative in man was offered in worship to the one Creator of all. Thus, in all Hindu worship, the arts find an important place. The temple is the home of architecture and sculpture. Great poets presented their works to the public for the first time there. Great philosophical discussions which represented some of the greatest flights of the human spirit took place in the temple. To the temple were attached musicians and dancers so that at the appointed hours of worship, music and the dance could form not only appurtenances of worship but integral parts of the ritual as well. Nurtured as it was in the temple, it became a vehicle for certain type of ideas and developed a refined and subtle idiom for that purpose. This is an important factor to be taken into account when we consider the future of the dance in India.

There are many references to dancing in the *Rig Veda* from which we may infer an origin earlier than the Puranic age. There are more elaborate references in the *Itihasas*. A study of all these would reveal that, while there were professional dancers, the art was one that was learnt and practised by the people in general. Whether it is poetry drama, dance or music, in the course of practice, all Indian

Art has evolved certain concepts and laws which are common to all of them. Of all these, the concept of *Rasa* holds the central place. The object of all art is the working of *Rasa*.

"Artistic beauty cannot have existence, unless the heart of the man of good taste is moved to delight by fascination of its expression" says *Alamkara Raghava*, a work on Indian Rhetoric. This enkindling of emotion which results in an impersonal delight whatever the nature of the emotion may be, is *Rasa*. It is totally different from an emotion that is the outcome of mere experience of the senses. In the latter case, the feeling is limited to the individual concerned. In a Dance, the emotion portrayed is impersonal and is shared. It has undergone a transmutation so that what a member of the audience feels even when viewing a sorrowful scene is not something unpleasant but is really a delight, an *Ananda* that is aesthetically conveyed through a superb portrayal by the dancer. Thus, through the dancer's art, we feel in turn all the emotion, but in each case, the final result that is left on us is not the effect of the passion itself but is an impersonal absorption in the aesthetic mood and *Ananda* which is the innate nature of the *Atman,* shines resplendent breaking all the fetters of every day circumstance.

This, to put it in very short compass, is the theory of *Rasa*. The *Rasas* are now generally accepted to be nine, namely, *Sringara* or love, *Hasya* or ridicule, *Karuna* or pathos, *Vira* or herosim, *Raudra* or fury, *Bhayanaka* or terror, *Bhibatsa* or disgust, *Adbh*uta or wonder, *Shanta* or peace. In the days of Bharata and Kalidasa, *Shanta*, was not accepted as a *Rasa* for the very valid reason that it was a condition in which all passion is stilled. The sentiment that gives great scope to the dancer with all its variations, and gradations, its refinement and subtleties is *Sringara* or Love. According to Bhoja, one of the great authorities on Indian Rhetoric, *Sringara* is the only *Rasa* and all the others arise as modifications from this. *Bhakti* or devotion which forms the basic subject matter of most Indian Dance is transcendent love. The greatest gift of the dancer is *Bhava* or the portrayal of emotion, for without *Bhava*, it is not possible to evoke *Rasa* in a cultured audience.

There are several ways of attaining his goal. One of the most important among them is through *Auchitya* or the propriety of subject matter and representation. It is accepted by the ancient authorities that Art has a supreme responsibility to Society. Just as Art is the flowering, through a particular way of life, of the genius of a people it is also the instrument which works towards the constant refinement and progress of a community. It is the life of the community that forms the subject-matter for the dance. But all situations in life are not appropriate for representation on the stage. The function of Art is to elevate the spirit, not to degrade it. Bharata also draws a difference between *Loka Dharmi* and *Natya Dharmi* - between that which is accepted as normal to life as it is lived and so portrayed realistically, and that which the arts of dance and drama select, fix and refine out of these situations for an idealised or even sylised presentation on the stage. Indian Art has always favoured idealism as against realism on the stage. This conception of *Loka Dharmi* and *Natya Dharmi* is essential to an understanding of the Indian Dance and *Auchitya* or correct choosing of the subject matter is of the utmost importance. From the social point of view, we see before our very eyes how important the question of *Auchitya* is when we consider the patent effects of bad films, bad music, bad dancing or any other bad art on the collective consciousness of the people, especially the young. It was through the neglect of this concept of what is proper for representation, that Bharatanatyam in South India, very nearly went out of existence. There was a revolt against the art and many people began to refuse to go to Bharatanatya recitals. This state of things is now happily changed.

The conception of *Dhvani* also plays a great part in a true presentation of the Dance. *Dhvani* means "Echo" or "Tone" and implies the suggested sense that underlies a portrayal. A gesture, a turn of expression, should be able to call up implied suggestions just as a sound might evoke a series of echoes. In a good dance performance, this sense of suggestion is all important. When Sri Rama lifts up Siva's bow in order to bend it, the size, the weight, the unyielding nature of the bow, the strength needed to bend it, Sri Rama's extreme youth; all these have to be suggested by the dancer when he does not even have in his

hand anything in the nature of a bow. A dancer in the part of Ravana lifts up the mighty Kailasa and through a multitude of suggestions makes us see the magnitude of the mountain, how it towers into the skies. In the tender *Padams* of Kshetragna, with all their delicate echoes, the dancer must convey the entire subtle range of emotion that agitates the mind of the maiden as she awaits Sri Krishna. This vast field of suggestion enriches the art and no dancer is great unless she or he has the capacity to create a world of *Dhvani.*

From all this background has come the history of the dance which has not only spread all over India, but even to other countries like Burma, Cambodia, and Java (now known as Indonesia). It has kept its spiritual quality in whatever form, whether in the temple dramas called *Bhagavata Mela* of Tanjore District or in the *Kuchipudi* dance which comes from a village entirely composed of *Bhagavatas*, (Brahmins who made this art famous) or in what is known today as *Bharata Natya* or *Sadir* as performed by the *Deva Dasis* (or servants of the Gods) or in any other form. Except *Kathak* almost all of these have been temple dancing. The technique in each is different and is yet according to the Sastras. The question is asked whether it cannot be used to express modern life. Of course its form can be used for modern ideas, but as its form was a natural unfoldment of the Spirit and the spiritual conception, if it is used for another purpose it loses its meaning and can no more be called Bharata's dance. What was proclaimed by the Rishis as a sacrifice charming and pleasing to the eyes of the Gods must continue to be a sacrifice or offering to the Gods. It does not therefore mean that no further development is possible. How can any one who has studied the growth of the dance through centuries think so, for until a hundred years ago, the Art developed and grew under the fostering care of great geniuses. But, they did not bypass the spirit nor did they overlook the fact that that dance is a way of salvation through Art; that its purifying influence on human nature will ultimately lead to the realisation of the oneness of life.

- All India Radio - 14.04.1954

My Experiments with Dance

Friends, I am very sorry I could not prepare a paper on my subject to be distributed to all of you. In a way I am glad that I did not bring one because I wanted to talk purely from my experience. I find that much of the scholarly ground has already been covered by scholars like Dr. Raghavan and others. I therefore do not want to go through the same field.

My talk today is not meant to be a discourse on the *Sastras* because I am not learned in the *Sastras* although I come from a family of learned *Sastris*. My interest in *Natya Sastra* is due to the fact that I took up dancing, and the deep interest I have in the dance made me search and to discover all that is worthwhile in connection with it. So, it will be of my own experience that I want to speak to you first.

It happens that I started to learn the dance at a time when it was not so popular or prevalent in the country as it is now. It was difficult for me at that time, even to find the right teacher or even to know who was a good teacher and who was not. Not having seen enough of good dancing, I did not know who was the right teacher. When I started consulting people, everybody suggested different names. The final result was that my own intuition had to serve me and I am very happy in the fact that intuition did serve me well because I began with great masters. I may also say that my first interest in the dance came from having seen a performance of Anna Pavlova. But my desire to learn Indian dancing came after seeing Jivaratnam, who was the daughter of the famous Kalyani, pupil of Meenakshi Sundaram Pillai. At that time it was rare to see good Bharata Natyam recitals. We had to go from house to house to look for a good dancer. Cultured people had even taken a pledge that they would

neither approve of, nor see, Bharata Natya. Amongst them was my own father! So I had no chance of seeing the art till I was old enough to decide for myself.

I took up dancing at a period when others were giving it up and rather late in my life. In fact, I was nearly thirty when I gave my first Bharata Natyam performance. You may be surprised at this because a woman does not usually divulge her age but I do not mind.

At that time *Bharata Natyam* was called *Sadir* and there were many bad associations connected with that *Sadir*. It had acquired a very bad reputation because of the lives of the dancers themselves who were not all they should have been. But I felt that there was something marvellous in the art which should not be lost. At that time, in fact, there was a campaign to discontinue the dance in the temples. The result was that it was prohibited in the temples and this situation continues even now. I hope a time will come when the dance will find a home in the temple again, at least so far as the *Upacharas* - the religious aspects - are concerned.

I am a great believer in the *Sastras* and in tradition. I also feel that the traditional dancers had something very wonderful. Their dedication to the art was remarkable. In fact, they had more dedication than many of us have today. My interest in the *Sastras* has shown me that much of what they contain can be validated by practical experience. I have always said that *Lakshya* came from *Lakshana* and I am more certain about it now than ever. I also believe that we should follow tradition but we must remember not to accept everything just because it is in the tradition, just as we should not do anything just because it is new. Everything new is not creative because there is a great distinction between inventiveness and creativeness. The creative spirit comes from deep sources while the inventive spirit is purely mechanical.

Many great dancers of the older generation are fortunately still living so that we can see what they have to teach. They were able to demonstrate the greatness of the art. This has been our good fortune. I started to learn first from Gouri Ammal, very famous, and wonderful, for her *abhinaya*, and later,

from Sri Meenakshi Sundaram Pillai, a very famous *Nattuvanar*. He was a genius with a perfect sense of rhythm, *tala* and *laya* and, at the same time, he was a great creative artist. I say all this in order to make you understand the background. Though I learned the art in the traditional way, I felt then that there were many things that had to be changed. This is a very important point that I want to stress. If you wish to follow tradition - even as I did - there is no need literally to copy everything. All that existed twenty five years ago is not necessarily applicable today, but we must follow the spirit of the *Sastras*. If you follow that spirit properly, it is possible to be completely creative. The *Sastra* does not prevent one from being creative. On the other hand, it helps creativeness.

It is said that this art had approached extinction because it was vulgar and had become coarse. Of course, there were many things that had to be changed. I found it difficult to do everything as was usually taught. *Abhinaya* in *Sringara Bhava*, for instance, was not always delicate and in good taste. Some of the dances were quite vulgar and so I wanted to avoid such things. Take the *Pada varnas* for example. These were mostly very beautiful - musically - but I found that many of them were composed on people, Serfoji Maharaja and others. I discovered that very often the king was praised as if he were God. Yet he was described as a very common kind of human being. I felt that this kind of *Narastuti* - the attempt to deify a particular person - should have no place in art. I therefore took themes on *Bhakti Rasa* - subjects which were enlightening, noble and uplifting which we could follow in the dance completely as it was. I say this to you not as a criticism against the dancers or the dance teachers of that time. Meenakshi Sundaram Pillai was greatly sympathetic to me and he would himself say to me; "This gesture is good but it is not for you. Do not do it". I have heard him say this out of his great affection, sympathy, understanding and learning.

The other thing I wanted to change was the stage, the costumes and the way the musicians sang. I still remember very well how on the stage behind the dance often there were advertisements of Amrutanjan and all kinds of things!

The back curtain was a dirty piece of cloth. There was no aesthetic sense evident anywhere outside the actual dance. The jewelry was very beautiful, but the kind of costumes that were used - the saris, for example - were very cheap tinsely stuff that did not match the dance and were, according to me, too showy. The pyjamas that were worn, the Victorian type of cholis - they all seemed to me to be a mixture of many different civilizations. All these I felt required thought and after thought, appropriate change. It was not easy to design a new costume. I had to try to make something new - not with the idea of making it look new but with the idea of making it look old. In other words, create costumes that were in the spirit of what our people wore thousands of years ago. This was not very easy. It was not easy to get help from the sculptures because they are clothed only below the waist! Therefore we had to think creatively in order to catch the old spirit. Gradually I evolved my costume, and those used in Kalakshetra are based on my original design. The traditions were being followed in spirit though there were changes in other ways also. There were changes, for example, in the musical accompaniments. Actually, in these early days, a Clarionet was used for accompaniment. Somehow, I felt that this was not appropriate. There may be some people who will disagree with me on this point because the Clarionet is very beautifully played in South India. I thought of trying the *Mukha Veena* which is a beautiful instrument. Further, it seemed to go very well with the temple atmosphere. Of course, *Mukha Veena* is not an easy instrument to play. The *Sastras* prescribe a Veena among the instruments used for dance music. The Veena is however all right only for a small audience, though in these days of microphones, I suppose this does not matter. I feel however that microphone spoils the quality of the music.

In order to dance well, it is necessary to know the meanings of the *Hastas* and the various gestures that are used. When I put questions about the meanings of the gestures to my teacher, Meenakshi Sundaram Pillai, he was able to give the meaning of the *slokas* because he was a learned man. But generally, dancers those days did not know the difference between one gesture and another. They would simply say that they did as they were taught. It was somewhat surprising that even some Nattuvanars did not know the full meaning of the dance. Of

course this may not apply to very great dancers. I am saying all this only as of general application. There were always exceptions.

Then again, very often there was the general idea that if the musical accompaniment was sung in a high pitch, a high *sruti*, the music could be heard very far away. This I know is true for the *Nagaswaram*, but I thought that for the dance there should be good music according to proper *sruti*. I thought we should use more of the devotional types of music which had a spiritual content. I could not simply accept many of the *javalis* and the *padams* as they were. They had to satisfy my own feeling of what was right and true to atmosphere before I could dance to any item.

At that time it was very difficult to make any reforms in music. In the families of a few dancers, great music was a family tradition, as, for instance, in the case of Bala Saraswati. She comes from a family of musicians. But my family could not be said to be a family of dancers. When I asked musicians to sing for me, they would simply say that it was much below their dignity. It was very difficult to break through this attitude. A great pioneer in this direction however was Sri Papanasam Sivan who said he did not care about his reputation and that, if his reputation depended only on this, he did not need it. So I chose different types of songs as I wanted to experiment with *Bhakti rasa* because dance was essentially spiritual, it had all the spiritual elements in it. Therefore it was only a matter of discarding a few things and learning a great deal. That is also why I thought I would try the compositions of Tyagaraja or Syama Sastri. I tried those compositions and they still inspire me. But, as I have said before, I would not like to have too many *Kirtanas* in the dance. *Padams, Javalis, Varnams* etc., also have their own quality and atmosphere. They have fine music and have their own beauty.

In those days dance performances, used to take four or five hours. They would sometimes finish only in the morning. I thought this was too much for modern times and I had to shorten the dance programme. Now everybody wants the programme shorter still. The problem was to keep the *dharma* of the dance intact and yet keep it within a two or a two and a half hour limit. In

those days the *Varnam* alone would go on for two to three hours. The *Tillanas* would be equally long. In the days of Jivaratnam and others, the dances were programmed, planned in this sequence:- Alarippu, Jatiswaram, Sabdam, Varnam, Padams, Javalis, Tillana and so on. For a long time I discarded *Sabdams* because it was an item which needed good music. The musical composition of a *Sabdam* is simple, nothing special here, but unless it is sung very well, it has little value. The *Jatiswaram* has all the music of the *Nritta* - no *abhinaya*, no words - only *swara* and a little *Tirmanam*. The *Varnam* must have elements of all the aspects of the dance - *Nritta, Natya, Tirmanam, Swara and Sahitya.* It contains everything. Sometimes an element of the *Tillana* also comes into a *Varnam.*

A tradition begins when the spirit of the *Sastras* becomes canalized into a particular form of expression. I felt I might also try to work out the spirit in my own way. I felt there was no harm in changing the accepted order a little. What I say should be understood in the right spirit. No one should think that we can play about with art. In the old days there was devotion in the art and in the way dancers gave themselves to the art. It was wonderful. We have a tremendous amount to learn from them. I must emphasize that no reform should be blind, intended just to show that there has been change. There is no value in change just for the sake of change although I say that when I started there was need for a great deal of cleaning up and spiritualizing. Still the trends, as they are now prevalent since the art has become popular in India, are more vulgar in another way than what used to be then. I hope you do not mind my saying this. The dance now has no discipline. It does not have training. There is not the same dedication to it. I do not apply this to everybody who is present, but, as a general rule. The tendency today is to borrow ideas and not to put one's heart and soul into the whole thing. I say you can discard a few things and yet keep the art pure. I would like to compare the process to the refining of gold. But today the tendency is to discard the whole, the dross and the gold alike. If we go on like this, I am afraid there will be hardly anything left. This is the difference between the old and the new. The Devadasis and others who danced, whatever their customs, whatever the circumstances in which they lived, they

were people with devotion; they were excellent artists. Even today they really are the people from whom we can get the best ideas in Bharata Natyam. I must pay my tribute to them. They were real artists.

I hope you do not mind my having gone into all this. I said all this because I wanted to tell you what thoughts were in my mind when I began to dance. You must remember what has been said in the *Natya Sastra* and other texts how the dance was created. It is supposed to be a great spiritual experience. It is supposed to be another *Veda*, supposed to have been given to the world because there was corruption; there was cruelty and selfishness and the character of humanity had to be changed. If this is the case, we have to remember that we have the same responsibility today and so we have to live in the same spirit. We cannot dance only for the sake of showing off or for the sake of name or fame. We must dance because our hearts are in it; because it is an art of very great dedication. It is said that if art is degraded, then a curse falls on the country and art disappears from it. I wonder whether that curse will descend on our country because if we degrade the art, we perhaps will ourselves be responsible for its destruction. It is remarkable how such a possibility has been foretold.

The dance itself is a marvellous art because it is an art which unifies all arts. In it there is vocal music, instrumental music and there is drama. There is a *Sloka* in the *Malavikagnimitra* which says that the *Rishis* think of the dance as a charming sacrifice to the *Devas*, beautiful to behold. Every element of art finds a place in the dance and therefore all types of people can find enjoyment in it.

All these dances have been described in the *Sastras* as expressing different kinds of *Abhinaya: Angika, Vachika, Satvika* and *Aharya*. All these types arose from a religious background. It we withdraw from religion, then I think we are withdrawing from the dance. If we are to dance themes other than the epics and the religious texts for which specifically the *Hastas* have been created, I do not know what we shall do. How is life as it is lived everyday in our homes to be represented in a dance form which is not suited for this kind of interpretation. Once I was surprised to see someone dancing the part of Krishna

wearing appropriate costume one minute and smoking a cigarette the very next moment. This kind of attitude must be avoided. The *abhinaya* must have religious sanctity behind it. That is why certain themes do not suit this form of dance. The dance has to be traditional; it must be religious and spiritual in a big and broad sense. Otherwise the lower side of the dance will become more manifest. If I may say so, dance is a very dangerous art - the most dangerous of the arts because of its instrument, the human body. This human body is a most wonderful instrument. You can do what you like with it. If you are spiritual you can spiritualize your body too. When we see what the body is doing, we are seeing what the individual is thinking and feeling with consciousness. If we are not very careful, through subtleties too fine to notice, we bring in certain elements which are opposed to the purity of the art. This has happened in the past and is happening even today. That is why I say it is a very dangerous art. We must walk its path as if it were a razor's edge. We must be strong in our minds about following a certain cult irrespective of whether people like it or not.

- Demonstration Talk at Dance Seminar in Delhi on 02.04.1958

Ramayana the world over

While attending the International Ramayana Festival, in East Java in the small hill town of Panda An, I was more than ever struck by the fact that India had the most glorious background than any country in the world. While in the modern world, the great progress of science and technology has won the admiration of the world, India's name became glorious because of its spiritual message which is in fact the essential culture of the land.

It is remarkable to see how Ramayana, the most ancient of all stories, which is an epic rendered into great poetry in the Sanskrit language by Sage Valmiki, has lived through many changes in history particularly of the eastern world. Perhaps many of us in India have been under the impression that Ramayana is a story only for India. In fact there are many in the south who are not even conscious of its real impact on the rest of India. But, there is no doubt that the story of Ramayana is a story of which one can never be tired and which lends itself to every aspect of life. Therefore, it has been the object of interest for the painter, the sculptor, the poet, the musician, the dancer as well as for other artists and artisans, who have interpreted the story in a thousand different ways. India is pervaded by this story of Sri Rama in plays and musicial discourses, folk dances, puppet shows, and many other art forms. But to find it to be a living tradition in so many other eastern countries is really a great wonder to all of us.

By attending the International Ramayana Festival, I discovered that Ramayana was even rendered into Jataka stories by the Chinese very early after the Christian era. In fact, it has been said by Prof.Lokesh Chandra, Director of International Academy of Indian Culture in Delhi, who has done great research,

that even in Siberia, the Ramayana is known. In modern days, the story of Ramayana is being presented in dance form in Kathakali and Bharata Natyam in western countries by artists who go from India. Who knows, a time may come when there may be some inspired people who will find this story worthwhile for the presentation of spiritual culture in the west. In this way, India's contribution is unique and can never die whatever be the current state of our civilization.

The Ramayana that I saw and heard about in East Java were different versions of the Ramayana of Burma, Malaysia, Thailand, Cambodia, Bali, East Java, Djokjokarta, Solokarta, Sumatra and Sunda. It was indeed a remarkable experience to see how, in the form of dance and dance drama, the great story was not only depicted, but how well the artistic tradition had been preserved, particularly in the South-East Asian countries. Amongst them, the country that has a very short tradition and was, therefore, more modern in presentation was Malaysia. But, there were certain unique features in regard to each one of these. The presentation of Ramayana in the Burmese version was of course done in the Burmese style of dancing. But the story was similar to the Bengali version, where the hero seemed to be Ravana and so the Ramayana story was called the story of Mahardja Ravana or Maharaja Ravana. But, here of course, the conception was that Sita was the daughter of Ravana. Though the dance drama was performed both in temples and palaces, and in the villages, the most important part of it was the inspiring character of Rama and the story's ethical value. The costumes were unique in the old Burmese style, for, as one of them remarked, Rama though he was born in India, was a person of the world and his story was the story of the people of the entire world, and therefore, Rama who was born in India was no more Indian, but was a Burmese as he had been adopted into that land. In the same way, we can find that Ramayana was adapted by each country as if was its own.

The Burmese version was also interesting, because they accepted the appearance of Maya Sita. As in the Adhyatma Ramayana and some other Indian Ramayanas, Ravana did not abduct the real Sita at all but only a Maya Sita.

Again, when the Nagasthra was used, it was not only Lakshmana but Rama also who was overcome and Hanuman came to help them. But there was no bringing of Sanjivini or anything like that. In the actual presentation, a veil was held between Sita and Ravana and Ravana saw her only through this veil of Maya. The greatest importance was placed not on the divine nature of Rama but on the ethical value of the story and its aesthetic emphasis on beauty.

In the Thai version, originally it was called Ramakien, which was the earliest version of the Rama legend in Thai literature. The music was mainly instrumental with very little of singing. From the point of view of production, the Thai version was very similar to the Cambodian. But there is one small variation in the technique in that the Thai production brought in slightly more properties on to the stage and also had many poses and postures which were sculpturesque and beautiful. The costumes were gorgeous and they had symbolic colours as in the Cambodian. But the Cambodian has the special feature of exquisite and most delicate foot movements and greater grace. The remarkable point which was made at this Seminar was the fact that the finest characters of Rama and Lakshmana were depicted in these countries by women, because these characters were considered so refined that they could be expressed only through the delicate gestures of women and not with the power and crudity of man. Because of this, even in the war between Rama and Ravana, Rama's arrows which destroyed Ravana were so delicately shot and used with such grace and beauty that one might think that it was a flower arrow rather than an arrow that killed. There were many fine points in the depicting of these characters that one understood how in some ways they have brought in certain ideas of grace and delicate beauty which do not exist even in India. .Of course, the characters were identified by their costumes and their masks, and every character had his own style of movement including the gestures.

In the Cambodian or Khmer version of the Ramayana, there were certain traditions which were, very true to our ancient ideas of the dance.

The important thing is that in these countries the performing art is a living art which has never lost its tradition as it has in India. However, apart

from the stage presentation there are no other presentations of the Ramayana, like Harikathas, songs, concerts, poems etc., in which we excel so wonderfully. In the Cambodian or Khmer version of the Ramayana, there are certain traditions which are very true to our ancient ideas of the dance.

The most remarkable country as far as the preservation of the performing arts, particularly Ramayana is concerned, is Indonesia. Though I saw six different versions of Ramayana from the same country presented by different troupes who were all expert dancers and for centuries had kept up the tradition, there was an immense amount of creative imagination expressed in these. In the Indonesian version, I would say, the chief key note was the beauty of the presentation with wonderfully beautiful traditional costumes, exquisite music of the *Gamelang* and the extraordinary delicacy and grace of their movements. I saw six different versions of *Jatayu* and it was very difficult for me to say which was the most beautiful. Perhaps I might say, to me the favourite was the Djokokarta version. All the monkeys used masks and Hanuman is a great hero who is depicted with wonderful beauty.

One of the most impressive things was the very large number of artists who took part in the Indonesian performances. Sometimes, there were hundreds on the stage and each one knew his place and moved in the most harmonious way forming excellent floor patterns. It is very difficult to use such a large number of artists, as I know from experience.

In the ballet from Djokjokarta, the *Agnipravesam* of Sita was beautifully shown. *Agni* was represented by about 20 girls who used beautiful yellow and orange scarves. One of the specialities of Indonesian dance was the way they manipulated scarves. It was part of their technique and they did it with remarkable grace. At first I could not understand what those 20 girls represented. Then it became obvious that they were all supposed to be Fire Devas. When Sita prepared to enter the fire, these 20 girls started to move the scarves in such a way that they looked like flames. It was beautifully done. Of course, it was clear that scarves were being used. But they were most suggestive and was not meant to be exact. It was wonderful for me to note the beauty of

the costumes and the colour schemes. And I must confess that in these respects these countries, especially, Indonesia, had outshone India by far. I do not know what India was in the past in these respects. In modern India, it is very difficult to find people with a very good sense of colour. Another impressive scene was Hanuman setting fire to Lanka. In the Balinese version, Rakshasas came with torches in order to set fire to Hanuman's tail. But he played around them in such a very clever way that he managed to capture two torches and went flying round, setting fire to everything.

The Balinese version had the most vigorous movements, while the East Java Hanuman was the most striking. The interesting thing about all these was the fact that in none of these dance forms was there any accompaniments and the way of singing songs or verses as we do in India. In short there was no *Vachika Abhinayam*. There were songs here and there and the tune of some of the songs even resembled some of our *ragas*. They do not have a *raga* system of music. But they have names for different melodies and special songs which represent different emotions like sorrow, happiness, heroism and so on. The *Gamelang* is a very elaborate accompaniment with a large number of instruments, gongs, etc., and it is played somewhat like our *Jalataranga*, and it is exquisitely beautiful to the ear. Another feature which seemed so different from India is the lack of facial expression. *Satvika Abhinaya* is the speciality of Indian dances, particularly the South Indian. But you cannot say that *Abhinaya* was lacking, because they had plenty of expression in their movements. Though there was no *Abhinaya* in the face, the feeling was conveyed somehow or other by movements and you felt sad when Sita was sad.

It is now well known that the story of Ramayana had spread into Tibet and that manuscripts have been found there which confirm this. From Tibet the story has spread to Mangolia and Siberia. When one sees these productions of the Ramayana - some perhaps with religious significance, some without any religious significance, but still inspiring to the people of the country - one realises how India has been able to give a great message to the world, which has produced many powerful art forms.

- Kalakshetra Quarterly 1971

Kathakali

Kathakali, according to many South Indian scholars is Bharata Natya in its *Natya* or Drama aspect. South India during the time of Chola Kings developed many types of dance dramas. There were many names given to these different dances, but the special types during the Chola period were the *Kuravanji* and the *Chakkiyar Koothu*. Both were attached to temples which have always been the Centers of Art. The Chakkiyar dance drama does not exist any more except in the temples of Kerala and can been seen nowhere else. The movements and steps of this dance are considerably changed and are more like Kathakali, another form of Dance Drama which is not so much attached to temples. According to many books Kathakali has its origin in Bharata's Natya Sastra and essentially it has not changed, though its character and the *Nritta* portion has been influenced by some of the local dance movements which had already existed in Kerala.

People believe that Bharata Natya is performed only by women. But in reality dance dramas of the Bharata Natya type were performed by men. These can be seen even today in some of the South Indian villages. Similarly Kathakali characters, even including those of women, were performed only by men. However a generation or two ago women of the best families learnt Kathakali and took the part of the women characters. This shows that in very olden times the style must have been a little different, for the dance now even of the feminine characters is very masculine and vigorous.

The Kathakali which is seen all over India today is generally the modernized version and not much accepted by the old generation who have seen the best in their own land. Kathakali contains all the elements of dance

according to the *Natya Sastra* but with strong emphasis on the *Natya* aspect. While in Bharata Natya, the *Nritta* portion is the most dominant and beautiful, in Kathakali, the *Bhava* (facial expression) portion is the strongest, which is natural since it is a dance drama.

Except to the people of Kerala who are familiar with the dance, the first impression from the point of view of those who have studied Bharata Natya is the striking difference in spite of the similarity of these two dance traditions. In Kathakali, not the usual kind one sees everywhere, but in the olden style there is great beauty of thought, vivid imagination, and complete lack of vulgarity, but the natural postures and movements are such that due to the extreme exaggeration and elementalism, the real beauty of the performance is hidden and obstructed. In the modern expression of Kathakali, the postures and movements are a little more natural but other elements have come in which, on the whole, tends to kill Kathakali rather than reform it.

Kathakali, as every other ancient Indian art, is also a spiritual expression, but instead of being performed in temples, it is performed in the open air in the villages and produces a spiritual and uplifting entertainment for the people. Great and beautiful stories have been written into dramas in exquisite poetry which, is equal to any literature in the world. These dramas are from the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, and the Bhagavata entirely. They are composed in alternate *Slokas* and *Padas*; the *Slokas* are sung in *Raga alapana* and without set *Tala.* They are like the chorus in a play and are not danced, but they introduce the *Padas* which are set to definite *Ragas* and *Talas* and are danced or acted.

The language of Kerala was originally Tamil and the very old Tamil script seen in the temples is very like the Malayalam script in general appearance. But later with the influence of Sanskrit, Malayalee literature abounds in Sanskrit terms with a beautiful blending of old Tamil.

There were very great people, including Kings, who were well versed in Kathakali and therefore wrote inspiring dramas for it. The greatest of them who was the last independent ruler in India was the King of a part of Kerala

now called Wynad. This great personage was a very fine scholar and ruler and one of the greatest warriors known in Kerala.

The story is told that as a little boy he was remarkably stupid and his mother who was a very learned woman-there are many such in Malabar - was quite disappointed in him. Then she heard of a miracle waterfall near by, which was blessed by Saraswati, Goddess of Learning. According to tradition if even a very stupid person bathed under that waterfall regularly, he would become a genius. The mother left the child under the waterfall to live or die. The child lived and wrote *Krimmira Vedha Kalyana Saugandhikam*. In his last drama, he put into the mouth of Yudhishthira the words, "The forest is my fate". And certainly the forest was the fate of the author himself, for he was later exiled.

These olden day rulers were learned scholars in music and dance theory but they developed fully the possibilites of *Abhinaya* in dance and one finds in Kathakali therefore a far larger number of *Mudras* than in Bharata Natya. One of the great books written by a very cultured ruler is *Balarama Bharata*. This valuable book was written by Bala Rama Varma, Maharaja of Travancore who ruled in the 17th Century. Based on such learned books *Abhinaya* was fully developed in Kathakali. *Vachika Abhinaya* is represented only in the singing of the accompanying musicians which is in the same style as Carnatic music found elsewhere in South India. They have many types of percussion instruments, such as the *Maddalam, Edakku*, etc. and instead of the small bell metal anklets used in Bharata Natya, enormous ones are used by the dancers making the sound very powerful and too loud for closed spaces and suitable only for the open air.

Unlike Bharata Natya dancers, Kathakali actors are not allowed to sing and the only persons allowed to speak are those who act the part of evil spirits and *rakshasas*.

Aharya Abhinaya is very elaborate in Kathakali. The costumes generally are like full crinolines, the main colours being red and white. The women characters have a set way of hair dressing and wear a sort of veil, so that a

Muhammadan rather than a Hindu impression is created. This, added to the exaggerated bending and other postures of the legs produces a dwarfish appearance to the dancer.

There may also be another very good reason for the comparative lack of importance given to the appearance of the leg and foot movements, for there is well-known tradition that Kathakali is basically a mime drama given by Lord Vishnu to be enacted only through actions of the upper torso of the dancer. The story goes that the first guru of Kathakali was doing his meditation while bathing in a river. Vishnu appeared before him and revealed to him the *mudras* of Kathakali. But as Vishnu was also standing in the water only his torso above the waist was seen. Therefore, only that portion is presented to the world through Kathakali. But there is no doubt that the facial and arm movements by themselves are remarkable. Kathakali dancers are geniuses, particularly in the representation of nature, including animals and birds and are adept in a variety of facial expression.

The costumes give the impression of great antiquity but differ greatly from our temple figures and bronzes. On the other hand, the jewels are very Hindu in character, though again highly exaggerated. The head-dress or *Kirita* is symbolic and conveys immediately the part the actor is taking. These are extremely beautiful made by craftsmen who specialize in these wooden and papier-mache ornaments. The makeup of the face again is elaborate and suggestive, with varying colours which denote the character. This is also fixed according to the type of part an actor is taking.

Sattvika Abhinaya is more vivid in Kathakali than in any other art. In the training of the artists, every little movement of the eye, every lift of the eyebrows and control of facial muscles is taught in great depth so that it is possible to express different emotions by facial expression and suggestive eye movements. As in every aspect of Kathakali, *Sattvika Abhinaya* is very exaggerated in expression. At first it appears as if this *Bhava* is over-expressed, but one realizes that it is necessary for Kathakali actors are highly made-up and the performances take place all night with only the subdued light of brass

oil lamps. So all actions have to be emphasized to convey the meaning. The makeup is so elaborate that the actor sleeps while the makeup man creates and the result is a mask painted directly on the surface of the skin and not a separate covering worn over the face. This *Sattvika Abhinaya* is a speciality of Kerala and there have been many great actors who by their emotions and power of concentration have even changed the appearance of their faces and bodies to convey the story. For example, a famous Kathakali artist who was demonstrating the serpent in the story of Nala and Damayanti had to realistically portray the mortal agony of the serpent. There was a famous critic seated in the front row of the audience. After the play was over, the man who played the serpent went up to the critic and asked his opinion about his performance. The critic said it was very good but there was just one mistake, in which the artist had fallen short in the portrayal of the snake. For example, the snake when it writhes in mortal agony should be dark on the back and white on the lower surface of the body and the artist did not convey the difference of the two sides of the body and the appropriate colours while dancing. The artist said it was impossible to show, such a difference but the critic actually demonstrated this *bhava* and portrayed one portion of his face dark and the other pale by controlling the muscles of his face.

On of the unique features of Kerala is the fact that even today the average Malayalee knows and understands Kathakali far more than the people of any other part of India. The older generation of South India had a far better knowledge of the culture and art of our country. They combined it with learning. They learned the songs of Kathakali and Bharata Natya. They understood the *mudras*. They knew our religious stories and ancient books and were full of devotion to the great beings, heroes and heroines who gave India the spiritual blessing of their presence. This, when mingled with the dedication and devotion of artists who portrayed these figures, rose high like incense before the altar. This high sense of understanding is far greater in Kerala today than anywhere else, for though devotion exists in the hearts of the ordinary people, the arts have almost died and understanding has diminished. In Kerala fortunately the art is not dead and these Kathakali troupes are even now looked after and

supported by the well-to-do landowners as a recognition of the national service rendered by them.

But in order that Kathakali may become a national influence in India, I feel there is a great possibility for its future blending again with Bharata Natya in its completeness. How magnificent it will be when the true beauty of *Nritta* is revived in Kathakali and the general production relinquishes its over - realism and unnaturalness. Then it will become like the moving frescoes of the Chola temples! How great will be the contribution to India's culture when Bharata Natya revives its story presentation and creates dance dramas with the most discriminate and wise blending of the two arts which are one in spirit. No two arts are nearer in basic form than these two arts. But for this one needs a deep knowledge of ancient India, a love for India's ancient culture, and a proper sensibility, devotion and understanding of both forms. The correct approach can bring about this renaissance for the rebuilding of India's culture.

- All India Radio, Madras - 17.05.1943.

Village Theatre

Drama in India today stands very much in the need of the right kind of encouragement. To give this encouragement one has to understand the situation in which dramatic art in India finds itself at present. Village people have many varieties of Dramatic Art. Great artists have lived in villages. Due to lack of encouragement they have almost entirely disappeared. There is no younger generation even to carry on the technical side of Art. Artists need the encouragement of the government and the intellectuals. The sad truth about intellectuals is that they have no background or devotion. They lack good taste, knowledge of our traditions and the patience to learn. But they have a good idea of organisation and they do have the influence to destroy or to build.

One of the most important reasons for the destruction of the village theatre is the cinema. It may be difficult to prohibit the cinema but it can be gradually discouraged by a greater emphasis on drama. It is almost too late to rescue these arts. If action is to be taken it has to be done immediately. The idea of preserving art forms through films and tape recording is futile. For, when taste and appreciation have gone, what is preserved on films or on the tape will only seem to a future generation to be varieties of sounds and forms which no one can understand. These ways of preservation can be of immense value if they go with preservation through human agencies. A few Masters have to immediately be brought together with pupils of talent so that a group of them may be trained in the great traditions so that they become, in their turn, great Masters.

There are some famous villages in the Tanjore Dist., such as Nallur,

Oothukkadu, Soolamangalam, etc., where there have been traditional dance dramas performed by Bhagavatars in the Temples. They were scholars and musicians with a fund of knowledge of the *Sastras* of the Dance. I tried to get hold of the last two of these Bhagavatars, but with no encouragement and with serious difficulties, I could do nothing more than keep contact with them. Now, one of the two has passed away. There is also a famous village called Kuchipudi in Andhradesa which once was entirely occupied by great dancers and teachers of the dance. This system of dance and drama is hardly known outside the village. The village is now almost empty of artists. Two years ago, there were two great Masters living and now there is only one. South India was famous for a system of puppet plays. There is only one man from one famous family now living who is expert in the art. He is not teaching his family this art because there is no encouragement. There are other types of dramas called *Pallu* done by villagers, *Chakkiar Koothu*, *Nondi Natakams*, etc. These have almost disappeared but perhaps with intense research, study and encouragement of what remains they may yet be rescued. Besides all this, India was known for story telling with music, operas with music and without music, dance dramas such as *Kuravanji*, etc. Many of them were performed in temples and also outside, in the village square. These were performed for all occasions, marriages, sacred thread ceremonies, temple festivals, birthdays and for all festivities. They were supported by Mutts, Zamindars and also by the common people. Now even these supporters are disappearing. To rescue Indian drama from extinction today is equivalent to placing a man in the Iron lung. There is no time to be lost and this must be done by the government with a group of reliable, selfless people who still possess a love for the old culture and an understanding of the new.

To revive interest in the village theatre - the village must become the Centre for Art and not the city. Those in the city must derive inspiration from the village itself in order to give help to the villages. In the old days the temple was a great centre of the Arts. The village theatre was a unit that combined many aspects of learning. First and foremost, there must be among the people a thorough knowledge of the traditional stories, a full command of the language of the people, both classical

and colloquial. The theatre is really a synthesis of all Arts. The craftsman, the painter, the story-teller, the musician, dancer and scholar are combined in the theatre man. If one takes the Marionette plays, the dolls were made with great skill but also with the knowledge of tradition; traditional stories, costume, jewellary, etc. Today, it could easily be revived if the village craftsman could work in schools to produce such crafts as would help the theatre. The school children have to learn crafts. Why should not the crafts to be inspired by the idea of the theatre? They could prepare model villages, model theatres and puppets and learn to paint them and be skilled in the art of using them.

Unless the villages get spoiled by modernism, the village is the ideal place for a theatre, for it has all the environment for play-production. The temple is an ideal place. The beauty of the architecture goes so well with the usual subjects so that curtains and modern stage settings are not only superfluous but become ugly. Nowadays they put electricity in the Temples and the modern Indian theatres are full of the horrible drop curtains and coloured lights which so many think are the last word in beauty. There are many ways of making a stage attractive by ordinary and simple things available in a village. If the play production is not in a temple, there are many places of beauty that provides an ideal setting such as the temple tank which, with the water and the steps, makes an ideal place for production without a stage or stage properties. Even in the modern theatres of the west, simplicity is gradually becoming a keynote and great experiments are being made in using only a few suggestive articles as stage property. A great deal is left to the imagination.

Groups of trees also make ideal theatres. The only difficulty is often the seating of people so that all can see. For this steps are wonderful. These can be graduated, made out of tree trunks, stones, bricks, etc.

If a regular room or a hall is used with a stage, the simpler the stage the better. In China and Japan, stage properties for a particular scene were placed on the stage by the actors or stage helpers before the very eyes of the audience. In a modern well equipped theatre this is not always possible for it does not go with the setting. But generally speaking the idea of the actors and actresses being unseen until they appear on the stage is a Western one. This is alright but will be useful to

us only when the East has become well equipped with modern theatres and modern knowledge and skill in stagecraft.

In Kerala, for Kathakali plays, they use what is called an *URAL* a simple hour glass shaped seat, as a seat for all the characters whether a sage in the forest to suggest his being seated on an *Asana*, or for a King to suggest his throne. This is very light and made of wood. It is rustic but a creative artist would easily decorate it simply for extra colour or design. For curtains they use a *Thiraseela*. This is a beautifully decorated cloth with a figure of Sri Krishnna or any other symbol in the centre. It is held by two attendants who hold it in front of the character who is about to appear. This idea is beautiful and saves much paraphernalia for curtains which more usually than not refuse to move or even break down at critical periods in the story. This idea of the *Thiraseela* is an old idea and was prevalent in all temple dramas, although nowadays it is seen only in Kerala. In one or two places in Tanjore Dist., I have seen the same idea, but instead of a cloth with pure Indian colours and decoration, a white bedsheet was used! It is also possible to use bamboo poles with a curtain made entirely of mango leaves that can be drawn to either side. This is beautiful in an open air theatre.

It is a mistake to think, as so many do, that a village drama is full of ugly crude stage properties. In India, one comes so often against a theatre where there are ugly drop curtains with all sorts of scenes painted on it. I once saw a play of Shakuntalam where Shakuntala appeared in the *ashrama* of Kanwa in front of a curtain depicting a scene in London! This represents the decadent stage of Indian Art where tradition was respected earlier. This is the way theatre is developing, a combination of the East and the West, which still fascinates ignorant villagers. Such ideas of play production must be discouraged, and ideas of simple Indian life must take their place.

Lighting is another great problem. One either finds stage lights with many coloured bulbs and where there is no electricity one finds a gas light. Both are ugly though the latter is better. To understand proper lighting is more difficult than to understand good colour combination in clothes. I have not come across many Indians who understand this. Naturally beautiful colour combination in clothes is

easy for the villager. But even the greatest of artists, unless they are used to Stage Art, and until their eyes are trained to the blending of colours in light, are unable to show good taste on the stage. To see colour in light needs an entirely new mentality and it takes longer to acquire than any other Art. Besides, even if this is understood, it can be made possible to only in a beautifully equipped modern theatre. There are almost none in India and it will not be possible have them in the villages for a long time. Therefore, plain white light or gas light is safer as long as there is not too much of it. Too much light will ruin all the beauty of a stage. This is usually the mistake that is being made by most Indians. The old Indian way was to have torches or oil lamps. Again, in Malabar they have kept the traditions and have magnificent bellmetal lamps for Kathakali. This gives a soft beautiful light, but it is not always possible to use such a lamp in the open air or where the stage roof is made of thatch. It may even be unsafe unless it is in the hands of a professional actor. Small gas lights can be hung on either side of the stage with the beautiful hand-decorated shades to hide them from the audience.

Make-up is another very important feature. Again in the old Indian theatre the make-up was very simple, though in Kerala the make-up is very elaborate. In Kerala, in the Kathakali, the make-up is more a mast to represent different characters. Except for the eye make-up which is not only exceptionally beautiful, but made of the usual *Kajal* which is healthy. Much of the other material ruins the skin. Except for Kathakali in the traditional style, such make-up is unnecessary for any other play production. The important thing, even if we use western make-up is that the actors and actresses are made to look naturally beautiful. It is better to use too little make-up than too much. Rouge has no place in our Indian productions and again a prolific use is an ignorant mixing up of the East and West!

A general knowledge of the dance was so important for every actor because through *Abhinaya* it is possible to dispense with many stage properties, costumes, wigs, unnecessary ornaments, etc. Therefore, a knowledge of *Abhinaya* or at least the *Mudras* is necessary for audiences and therefore deserves a place in Education. The actor or actress must have a knowledge of *Abhinaya* for this purpose.

Costumes again are more beautiful in the villages and can be very cheap. It

is unfortunate that the village theatre these days is full of hired, dirty velvet costumes, georgette and chiffon saris, etc. The sense of colour is natural to villagers and all must learn from them.

Stage decoration is possible with village craftsmen for there are thousands of ways of decorating pillars with cloth, leaves, fruits etc. Floors can be made beautiful with so many designs of *Kolams* or *Alpana*. Variety of colour, design, etc., will depend on the producer and there is no end to variety if the producer is creative.

One of the most important ways to develop the Theatre consciousness of the villages is to have some thing similar to what existed in England under the name of the Arts League of Service. This was led by selfless idealists and great artists who had a travelling theatre with simple equipment and a group of devoted artists who travelled from village to village entirely with the idea of serving the villagers through Art. With cheap tickets, they produced plays anywhere and in this way new talent was discovered, new interest and a new consciousness was born. They gave plays, poems, puppet shows, music, dance, folk dance, recitations, etc. This can be done even more in India for we can add story telling, *Harikathas*, shadow plays, etc. In the present day, this can extend its scope to many new ideas. Although traditional and religious ideas are beautiful, India has grown, and a better understanding can be given through the arts of other cultures particularly the Eastern. Knowledge of other religions, and more than that, a contact with great literature can be provided through appropriate stories.

Even here in India amongst the galaxy of greatness, Indians only know a few names. We can have plays on the lives of Ashoka, Akbar, Pratap Singh, Mirabai, Kabir and many others. There are marvellous stories in the Indian languages of great people now known only to certain provinces. These can be dramatized and made popular all over India. There should be a compaign for greatness. This could help to divert the minds of the people to better values of life. Many of these plays are also of tremendous value in modern life. We have yet to develop historical plays. For this playwriters are necessary. These plays can be published in the language of the people. A great stimulus can be given to the Village Theatre by a

select group of people who could band themselves together to help the villages to develop their own Art. If villagers realised how popular their Art is with the educated class, they would start developing their and in this way a great tradition may be saved. Perhaps more than this will be accomplished. It may be the beginning of a new purpose in life which will lead to a better and more cultured living.

- Note to Mrs. S.K.Asghar, Asst.Ed.Advisor, New Delhi June 12th. 1950.

Theatre in India Now

It is a striking phenomenon of our times that the Theatre has come to occupy such an important place in the consciousness of our people. Educated men and women everywhere in this country have begun to realize what an important place the Theatre holds in our national life and how it has been one of the most potent factors affecting the lives of ordinary people, especially in the rural areas. Modern education has taken us far away from the moorings of our own culture. But even those who have been influenced by such education have come to realize, that the Theatre is used as a powerful medium in the Western countries which they admire and copy. Neither London nor New York would occupy places of such supremacy were it not for the cultural and formative influences focussed in Theatres and expressed in their plays.

It is not surprising, in view of the pre-eminence of traditions of Drama in this country, that we should today have become so Theatre conscious. Dramatic art has been alive in India in one form or another throughout the centuries. As in other things, our misfortune during the last hundred years or so has been a general decline of good taste even among the cultured. Until lately, when Social plays have begun to take a prominent place in our entertainment world, the themes were mostly drawn from the great epics, though Historical and other types of plays were not unknown. This has been a common foundation as far as all the Indian linguistic groups are concerned. It is natural that this should be so in our country which has thought and lived in terms of religion for such a long time. Today, when the West has come to dominate Eastern thought and Hollywood has become both a conscious and unconscious model of our drama, it is not strange that the Theatre too should feel that influence. Under this influence, we are now beginning to write Social plays,

farces and such types of presentation which are becoming more and more acceptable to the people.

In India as in Greece, the classical period denotes the Golden age of the Drama. Even today, the world of acting looks to Kalidasa and Sophocles for inspiration. In the West the Greek and Roman tradition has continued to live through medeaval times right to this time and has influenced Western Drama through all its history. But this tradition has been reinforced and vivified by fresh streams and great new schools arose which from the days of Shakespeare to the present time has kept the drama a strong and dynamic force in Europe and America. We too need a star of the calibre of Kalidasa, Sophocles or Shakespeare to achieve again the quality of greatness which they exemplified; to give vigour and direction to the Indian Stage in new terms and in a new idiom.

The Natya Sastra of Bharata which is a treatise on aesthetics in general and the Theatre in particular, deals with drama from every point of view. It is an exposition, the principles of which will be acceptable to actors and playwrights of any nation. Human nature being one, the essence of drama is the same in all countries. There is nothing more facinating than to see ourselves portrayed before our eyes. In no other way can we see so well, the emotion hidden in ourselves as on the stage. Therefore, drama can never become out of date though dramatic production can and does become out of date.

The principles of dramatic production have been more or less the same in all the countries. There has always been the stress on simplicity in production. Stage properties and costume are necessary and must be sufficient to carry conviction. But there must not be too much of either just as there must not be too little. The same principle holds true in acting. Technique is certainly necessary in speech or movement on the stage but anything that draws pointed attention to the speech or movement would be obviously wrong. Also, drama is the art that unites all arts. Any lack in any one of the arts that makes up the Theatre will be obvious in the production and will be a fault that affects the whole.

During the last sixty or seventy years there has been a remarkable change in

dramatic production in India - a change which has been a great deviation from the spirit of our ancient art. Indians are the best imitators in the world. This is because there is no country in the world (so far as I have seen and known) where there is more dramatic talent, quickness of perception of human nature, and genius for adaptability. Hinduism itself is the best illustration of this Indian faculty. Hinduism has adapted and assimilated into itself elements from all with which it has come into contact in the way of civilization, custom, philosophy and thought. Having grown up in this atmosphere, our people have the weakness of this quality and absorb things foreign without due consideration and discrimination. The result has not been very happy and often we have adopted the worst in the West (not having had a chance to know the best). In theatrical art, the innumerable back drops that are used, the painted scenes, the profusion of stage property, the velvet coats, the glittering jewels, all of which are considered so necessary for the success of a play, are part of this unhappy inheritance. While it is true that some great pioneers both in the south and the north of India made Dramatic Art an important part of our national life by seeing to it that the story and the acting were both uplifting and artistic, the actual production remained and remains far removed from the principles of art. Most of our plays are mere entertainment meant to fill the hour and do not leave a lasting impression.

In modern India yet another factor has appeared to influence the stage. While we have to recognize in the film a potent force and a mass medium which can reach millions of people, drama can never be replaced by the film because the direct and intimate contact between the actor and the audience is not possible in the latter. However, the film has proved itself to be an important medium and is a new art. As in the drama, so in the film, we have copied the worst from the West. Because of the power and reach of its influence, film has strongly influenced the stage. This influence has also not been good because the legitimate stage and the film must move at different levels. The microphone, another innovation of the modern world, has brought our plays down to a lower level still. In all this, we have copied, compelled to do so by our natural aptitude for imitation without discrimination, and not for any effect of intrinsic value that such innovations have brought.

Very often one stage production is very much like another. The interesting difference between the traditional play and the modern semi-western production is that, in the latter, the production is as important as the actor while in the former the actor is the most important. That is why we now remember the great days of the famous actors of the early years of the century, who by their own genius and personality, made the play. We still continue to have the same type of pseudo - western production but we have to search in order to find the really Indian and traditional presentation. Perhaps the *Kudiyattam* of Malabar is the sole surviving representative of that type.

A new life is beginning to pervade India and everywhere there is the realisation that the drama has to be encouraged, revived and renewed. There is a realisation that, though we produce plays using modern lighting and other modern advances in Theatrical science, we are completely out of date and do not know how to use all the material. The simple oil lamp gives a soft light which nothing can equal but with a sense of color and good taste, modern lighting can produce marvelleous effects which are dramatic, subtle and harmonious. This is an art by itself. The greatest art is in the right use of light and this we can learn only from the west. We have to learn it as seriously as we learn other subjects.

New efforts are being made all over India. New productions are being presented in every big city in good taste, using good technique and modern themes. The strange problem for us is how to produce plays that are purely Indian in spirit. We have to learn from the West but we must be Indian. I have seen that even those who produce good plays are unable to bring out the true spirit of say, Sakuntalam or other traditional plays. This is partly because we have divorced ourselves from our background and we find it easier to create a Sakuntala who is more like Greta Garbo than a genius grown out of the Indian spirit. This new problem is what we have to face and we have to face it in this cinema age.

The problem of the film is peculiar. The film engages a traditionally trained musician or dancer but very soon these change into a new type. The Indian film has now created a type of music and dance which we can definitely call cinema music and cinema dance. The classical way must be jealously preserved if it is to

be presented on the stage because it is easily seen that once an artist is engaged on the films, he or she cannot completely go back to the traditional way; at least not easily, just as the milk that is once curdled can never again be turned into fresh milk. Therefore there is this new problem for the Theatre to keep the two styles apart and present only what is typically expressive of the stage.

In the new life of the country, Theatre must play the greatest part for it is a medium for the expert, the professional, the amateur, the adults, youth and children alike. Each has a part in the Drama. No one is completely out of place and there is a part for each if we know how to choose the play and the characters. There is nothing that cannot be taught through drama. In the present day trend for dramatic activities and for the Children's Theatre, one sees the seeds of a great movement. Modern India is beginning to realize what our forefathers realized that Drama is a source of enjoyment for people of every taste and therefore, through that common enjoyment, humanity can be changed elevated and re-built. The only thing India needs, is taste. Technique is easily acquired, talent there is in plenty, there is background of tradition. But from the mire of bad taste that has overpowered us only in recent times, the great White Lotus of India must emerge. Today we must learn the technique from the West for there, they have preserved and developed their art to greater and greater perfection, but we must not copy them and must remain true to ourselves. In this connection it is interesting to note that the West, through experience, is coming unconsciously closer towards India and the Natya Sastra. The simplicity of their stage sets, the coming closer of the actor to the audience, the smaller, intimate productions (without microphones) the suggestive stage sets leaving much to the imagination; all these are very close to the Indian concept of play production. In these ways the West is coming nearer to the East and proves to us that art is essentially one without nationality but with traditional individuality.

- A.I.R. Madras 26.06.1958

To describe the indescribable is to describe music. Music being a language in itself, it needs no other language to describe it. All over the world no influence has been greater ~~~~ than the influence of music and India has been the fountain source of inspiration to all teachers and philosophers. No country in the world is more music loving than India and we can trace the origin of epics and poems to the inspiration of music. In the earliest and greatest epic of India, which is also the earliest epic of the world, the great sage Valmiki describes his story of Sri Ramachandra as being full of metric and rythmical beauty and as expressive of all the deepest human emotions and also as being the essence of the Vedas. The sons of Shri Rama who were brought up in ~~the~~ a hermitage in the forest learnt to sing the entire Ramayana and with the magnificent beauty of their voices which brought holiness to those who heard, they thrilled the sages in the forest ~~and~~ as well as people of all types so that one day when they sang before Shri Rama ~~himself~~, He, Sri Rama was so charmed that he left his throne and unconsciously edged his way to the two singers.

Such meaning is given to music in India that it is ~~~~ known as the very soul of the people, the language of the highest self which speaks to all creation. Shri Krishna the divine cowherd was beautiful enough to charm all by his very personality. Yet, he used the flute to stir in the hearts of all that which music alone can achieve. Thus did he attract all creation to him, not only human, but nature itself. The animal stood spellbound as ~~they~~ the lions before the lute of Orpheus.

Again and again sages and great beings have said that music is the language of the Devas for it is obviously the one and only force that brings to humanity a reminder to its divinity. The great sage Bharata speaks of music as the essence of the dance. Dance ~~and~~ ~~~~ ~~~~ without it the dance would become mere physical acrobatic. Music is a force for it ~~~~ can be moulded into any form. In India where the civilization has specialised in the understanding of spiritual value music has been the chief instrument of philosophers poets, healers, spiritual teachers and priests. Hence one finds the great tamil saints have spoken ~~sung~~ in poetry and sung in music. ~~Hatidasa has~~ Kabir the great Muslim devotee of Shri Rama spoke in poetry and

saig in music. There is no mark of distinction between poetry and music for poetry itself is an aspect of music was the basic language of Gods & man. In the dance an aspect of Abhinaya is called Vachika by which true meaning is conveyed to the dancer and true emotion is born. This becomes external in the expression of face and hands & body. Vachikam Abhinaya is the music that is sung to express the meaning of the dance. Yet when Nataraja is described as the Divine dancer ~~he is described~~ it is said that this Vachika is the speech of all people. So it is obvious both from this and from experience that this Speech or Sound comes into the world through the impulse of rythm, (a movement, or evolution) into two ways of musical expression, poetry and music as is understood by humanity today. So music is the root for the dance, for poetry and for thousand other expressions. Mira bai sang her devotion to Krishna, for it is ~~the~~ only through music that the human heart can satisfactorily pour out its deepest emotions even to the highest. Music will reach realms that no language can reach. It is for this that music is the language of the soul.

India has understood this and has allied the highest to the lowest forms of creation. ~~India~~ It has known that music is the miracle nectar that will give energy to those who need action. So the villager sings as he ploughs, as he drags water from the wells, as he carries heavy weights. So there is no field of activity in India ~~that~~ to which music has not given its stimulus. While it stimulates, it also puts to sleep the child or the sick. In the West also this is ~~used~~ as the ~~force~~ power to stimulate action for it has inspired ~~those~~ in the battlefields as in India, giving courage to those who are depressed and unhappy. India being a land of devotion and spirituality, one finds that wherever there is music it has always reminded us of the beauty of Shri Rama, Shri Krishna and every aspect of divinity, the one God with manifold forms.

As music is ~~the~~ ~~true~~ soul of our beings, naturally our emotions are stirred more deeply. ~~Where~~ It is by this stirring of the emotions that the mind is stimulated and inspired and the body is energised. Therefore the fundamental expression of emotion is the highest form of expression. So it ~~also~~ expresses itself in the highest devotion of Shri Thyagaraja who sings that music is the easiest happiest and the most effective way to liberation ~~i.e.~~ i.e. Moksha. To great musicians and artists of the West equally as in India music is the universal language of mankind, the speech that melts every heart.

Therefore Indian Music has based its knowledge on the human emotions, for only by understanding human emotions is it possible to use music as a basis for helping humanity. India's greatest contribution is this spiritual outlook allied to creation and its manifold expressions. Therefore the root of knowledge of music & dance is the science of the emotions. It is from this that the raga system of music is the essence of Indian music. The West specialises in harmony, India in melody. Generally it is thought that the latter is monotonous & bound to lack variety. As art is the soul of the people, Indian music is based on the soul of India's teachings. ~~Individuality~~ India's teaching is based on the individual, the aspect of God striving to become identified with the higher and universal God. So melody, the expression of the individual is so highly evolved that it is the very expression of individual aspiration. An individual is in himself an embodiment of myriad emotions with its varied depths and subtleties. Finally there is nothing more varied or fascinating than human emotions. It is from this point of view that the ~~raga~~ raga system of music has taken deep roots in Indian consciousness. In this way the individual musician not only has at his command all these hundreds of ragas, each with its expression of emotion, influence and idea, he is also the sole instrument of creative music. He alone can move in all the realms of music whether in heaven or earth. It is his experience & therefore as a creator, he is dependant on none else than his own individual inspiration. By this he portrays to all the ultimate experience of each one of his listeners. Western music is the essence of the collective individuality and except the composer, the musicians represent the part of the universal self, the harmony of many individualities that become the One. Therefore to the unaccustomed ear the Indian music with its ragas are more difficult to understand for in order truly to understand ragas, you must understand Man. Again it is the essence of Man in his dual qualities that reflects the music into sections of expression, the Raga & the Ragini. This is used only in the northern system of music. The idea behind it being ~~so~~ ~~[illegible]~~ so true, it has inspired painters & philosophers. This is again the fundamental truth of creation and we see it in the story of Parvati & Shiva who are embodied as Ardhanarishvara. One sees it in the story of Radha & Krishna - not the cowherdess who loved Krishna but essential principle of Man which is the Man & Woman. It also reveals the miracle of creation in which the highest union of the soul with its Cosmic being (atma & paramatma) is the ultimate end & beginning of the Creation. So again in music this principle

finds its expression in Raga & Ragini, Historically in the North, not only musicians but painters have portrayed Raga & Ragini and by their imaginative quality have woven hundreds of exquisite stories. Again one sees that music is not only poetry, dance & drama, but painting and colour. The raga system of music is a representation of the fundamental principles of life that it became the inspirer of all searchers after Truth. The music of the West grew in meaning & greatness through the great philosopher Pythagoras who came to India to study both philosophy & Music. It was he who brought to Greece certain number of Modes (inspired by the Indian Raga & similar to it) which formed the chanting of the Gregorians which harmony was evolved.

Music is the saving Grace of humanity and God's best gift to Man, the Art of heaven brought to earth and the art of earth that we take to heaven. Shall we be worthy of this precious gift and spread it on earth to remove its cruelties and sufferings so that the earth Goddess herself will sing in praise of both God & Man?

Music - The Southern Heritage

The contribution of South India to the totality of Indian culture is great. The South has a special significance due to the geographical position of the land and to the fact that it did not suffer from foreign invasions to the extent that other parts of the country did. The unified culture of India which was common to all parts of the country prior to the Muslim invasions was preserved untouched here longer than anywhere else.

By the time the Muslims reached the South they had already been profoundly influenced by the culture of this country and were in one sense no foreigners. The rulers of Bhamini and Bijapur dynasties were great patrons of Hindu art and literature. It was only when the unassimilable Europeans appeared on the scene that we began to be affected by new cultural concepts. Music and dance, as we know in the South, are perhaps the systems most closely related to the Indian *Sastras* on these subjects. Of course the fundamental contribution that South India has made in these matters is that of beauty and depth. Of equal importance is the fact that South India offers to the Motherland an art and culture that come comparatively untouched from the past.

As is well-known, according to the *Sastras*, *Sangita* or music includes the dance also. Dance in our country is music made visible and the same spirit pervades both the arts to a remarkable extent. However, if we take music as a separate art for the purpose of discussion, our appreciation of it has been guided and channeled by well developed critical knowledge which still survives among our people. Unfortunately this is not the case with the dance where, due to historical reasons, this knowledge has lapsed and so, the development of the art at this period is chaotic and uncontrolled.

But these two great arts have played an important part in the life of India and have entered the hearts of all by being the instruments through which religion and philosophy have pervaded this land. Whether in drama, dance concert, or the stage whether in the temples or in the fields, in the lives of the peasant, the king or the common man, music gave richness to our civilization and culture. Without this great musical heritage, there would have been an emptiness in the country's life where now there is wealth.

In recent times, unimaginative education has been responsible for the development of a good deal of ignorance and lack of interest in this treasure which we have inherited. Yet, till very recently, the Indian rulers and the nobility supported great musicians and composers, who, therefore, were able to occupy themselves with the task of preserving the tradition without interference from the outer world. We can never be sufficiently thankful for this. In South India, we are specially fortunate that this tradition has survived far more than anywhere else. This has been due to the fact that in our homes, children were taught music of our great composers and this helped the growth of an enlightened audience which is an indispensable requisite for the growth of good art.

Indians are a highly musical race and music is the complete expression of the soul of the India reflecting its inner life. Perhaps no country can exist without musical expression of some kind or other. Especially is this true of India, where life is lived in close contact to this great art. In the earliest and greatest epic of India, which is also the earliest epic of the world, the great sage Valmiki describes the story of Sri Ramachandra in metric and rhythmical beauty, expressive of all the deepest human emotions and also bringing into it the essence of the Vedas. The sons of Sri Rama, who were brought up in a hermitage in the forest, learnt to sing the entire Ramayana. With the magnificent beauty of their voices which brought a sense of holiness to those who heard it, they thrilled the sages in the forest as well as people in the city. Such meaning is given to music in India that it is known as the very soul of the people. Sri.Krishna, the divine cowherd, was beautiful of form and could charm all by

His very personality. Yet, He used the flute to stir in the hearts of all, that spirit which music alone can evoke. Thus did he attract all creation, not only human but all nature to himself. The animals stood spellbound hearing the music of the flute as did the lions before the lute of Orpheus.

India's greatest contribution is this spiritual outlook to artistic creation in its manifold expressions. The root knowledge of music and dance is the science of the emotions. It is because of this that the *raga* system is the essence of Indian music. The West specialises in harmony, India in melody. Generally it is thought that melody in itself is monotonous and bound to lack variety. As an art it represents the soul the people. Indian music is based on the soul of India's philosophy.

India's teaching is based on the individual and his aspirations. So melody, the expression of the individual, is highly evolved and becomes the very expression of individual aspiration. An individual is an embodiment of myriad emotions with their varied depths, and subtleties and, there is nothing more varied or fascinating than human emotion. It is from this point of view that the *raga* system of music has to be understood.

These basic concepts of Indian music have been preserved in the South Indian tradition. From the days of the *Nayanmars*, (whose hymns were probably sung in ways not much different from the traditional modes in which they are sung in places of worship today) to the period in which we live when authentic South Indian music of a very high order is being composed, this concept of the art as the very voice of God has been jealously kept and guarded. Nothing has survived that has not been the result of a deep spiritual and religious impulse.

It is also in South India that most of the important works on music, after the *Sangita Ratnakara*, were written. In his *Chaturdandi Prakasika*, Venkatamahi made a great and highly original contribution to musical theory by his classification of *ragas* and by his arrangement of the *Melakarta scheme*. He has exerted considerable influence on the work of Bhatkhande and his pupils with regard to Hindustani music.

I have always felt that the difference between the North and the South Indian styles in music came into existence solely due to the influence of the different invasions. The Muslim influence has been most potent in the North. Being highly sensitive to art and mystical in temperament, the Muslims enriched themselves and India by their contact. Many of the greatest musicians of the North have been Muslims, but it is obvious that their music was great because Indian music was great and Indian music was Hindu. The music in other Muslim countries has neither the greatness of Indian music nor as much variety and richness. Just as all dance had its origin in Bharata's Natya Sastra, though branching out into different styles known as Kathakali, Manipuri, Kathak, etc., all Indian music had a common origin. The variety has come in the blending of local influences with the original art. The South has been more untouched by all these influences and one can therefore assume that it is more ancient and truly Indian. I am quite sure that the music and dance of Orissa in the past was far more truly South Indian than North Indian. The art forms of Orissa and Andhra must have had many things in common. Curiously enough in the ancient days those who went from Orissa and colonised parts of South East Asia have influenced art there to such an extent that not only is the dance of South East Asia obviously Indian but also South Indian in character as can be seen today by those who go to Cambodia and other countries.

The important thing is that the art should live. But neither music nor dance will live anywhere unless that which gave them life lives. Indian music and dance are all bound to become conventional, monotonous and out of date if they are merely to be demonstrated through skill and intellectual ability. The one quality which has unified the whole of India has been that of *bhakti* or devotion. Even the Muslim musicians, whose forefathers were Hindus converted to Islam, while they influenced the music by their rich voices and mysticism, never took the music away from religion. Krishna, therefore, was a universal God adopted equally by the Muslims. One might almost say that Krishna united the religions not only by His divine flute-playing but by His very name.

- National Broadcast A.I.R. - 13.01.1960

Early Music Composers of South India

I am really glad that I have this opportunity of talking about South Indian music and some of the great composers of South India, who have shed lustre on South Indian music to people who have been drawn from different parts of India and from different nationalities.

I have always thought that much of our national culture is not complete unless we study the science of music. South India with its geographical position has been free from some of the foreign influences found in other parts of India. Music here has been developing continually for quite a number of centuries almost from the time of Bharata. In the case of Northern India you will find some centuries where the history of music is broken so that it is not possible to trace the history of music in a connected manner. South India on account of its sheltered geographic position remained unaffected and we are able to trace the history very well.

There are one or two points which we should know about Indian music for a proper appreciation of it. Indians are a musical race. Music to them is the complete expression of the soul, reflecting their inner life. We cannot think of any culture which could possibly exist without some form of music or other. Indian music is a perfection of what is called the melodic system. Unless this important feature of Indian music is appreciated particularly by those who are used to harmonic music, they cannot judge the beauty of Indian music. In all Asiatic countries you find only the melodic system. In India we have developed music to a remarkable degree of perfection. For instance, when a European says "Indian music is simply melodic", it sounds condescending and shows a total lack of understanding of the greatness achieved in this system. The builders of Indian music knew thoroughly the loss of harmony in their music and if they wanted to they could have developed music

along the same lines as European music. After all, music Eastern or Western enthrals the heart, whether Negro, Red Indian, or African, because it is natural that when a musical note is sounded it pleases the ear. This is a universal fact. The idea of notes or octaves is to give consonant sound which is pleasing to hear. During my stay in Europe, professors of music held that the melodic system of music was primitive. This is an unfortunate attitude, as these English professors had no opportunity to study Indian music at close quarters. The idea of harmony was there in the minds of the builders of Indian music but due to a deep spiritual approach to music as individual *sadhana* music along the lines of harmony did not appeal to them. Instead they definitely made up their minds to build music along the lines of melody. This landed us in the rich *Raga* system unknown to other countries. Even in the countries where there is a melodic system, there is no *Raga* system. Only in India the possibilities of the *Raga* system have been developed to the fullest extent. After all, harmony and pure melody are two forms, both expressing the idea of music. Expressed music is as definite as a language by itself and we are able to express ideas through that medium; even as in dance we are able to express our ideas and emotions by gestures. Just as harmony is one vehicle for musical expression; melody is equally another vehicle for musical expression.

I have always held the view that in *Sankarabharana* if Sri Tyagaraja had been a European he would have symphonised quarter tones. But this is no laughing matter since we have abandoned the idea of harmony and have chosen to develop along the lines of melody. What are the distinguishing features of our music? We have now twenty two *srutis* which is not found in any other system of music. A few may argue there is a very small difference between A and B flat, that it is only a mathematical division. In Indian music the scale of twenty two notes is an actual reality. We are using the quarter tones in our *ragas*. It is the quarter tones which give virility and strength to our music. Then again they are useful for *gamakas* which give character to the *ragas* in the sphere of creative music. This is what makes, Indian music distinct by itself and different from that of any other music in the world.

In the West great musicians are content with reproducing the compositions

of great composers. He polishes them in an artistic matter. People appreciate them. Here in India the musician in concerts not only reproduces the compositions of great composers; which is our heritage, but also creates extemporised music on the spot. Just as we are able to give extempore lectures on a given theme so also the Indian musician in a concert gives extempore lectures on *raga* which is the *alapana*. For example, *Sankarabharana*, *Bhairavi* etc. are given their proper shape and character and he shows creative talent in the unfolding of the *raga*. In India the musician is regarded as a great person who is able to show a wonderful degree of perfection in the sphere of creative music. He may or may not possess a very good voice, he may or may not be polished, but if he is able to develop the *raga* through *alapana* combinations of *swaras*, *niraval*, *pallavi* etc. he is a great musician. *Raga alaphana* and manipulation of the swaras are some aspects of creative music known as *Manodharma Sangita*, Hundreds of *ragas* have been created and numerous time measures, totally unknown in other countries of the world. We have also developed these to a wonderful degree of perfection. So if the question is ever asked; what is there in Indian music to compensate for the harmony of the West this is the answer. This is also the reason why instruments with keyboards are not developed in India, for while they can give true notes, they are incapable of the half notes and quarter tones necessary for *Gamakas*. It is for this reason instruments with strings were used for Indian music. I am tempted to quote the remarks of Mr.Clement, an authoritative writer on Indian music:

"The European has committed the unpardonable sin of having introduced the horrid harmonium in the life of Indian music. Those who advocate the use of tempered instruments are unaware of its utter inadequacy to give any idea of Indian notation. A word of warning appears to be needed by others who though not in favour of tempered music are imprisoned by western notation. They should remember that western notation without drastic change is as detrimental to their music as the tempered harmonium. The keys of western music with their key signature are part and parcel of a tempered system and are not suited to Indian Ragas".

The harmonium produces what is technically called pure notes. There is no possibility of producing *Gamakas* and it is not possible to produce those quarter

tones without which it is impossible to give a good pen picture of Indian music. Indians knew definitely about harmony, but the builders of Indian music thought that it was not true to the genius of India to develop Indian music along the lines of harmony. They abandoned the idea and developed music along the lines of melody. The result was numerous *Ragas*, and *Swaras* and various other characteristic that have shaped Indian music.

The earliest musical composition that we can think of in India, dates back to the seventh century. In Indian music there was no system of recording music. The art of music was there (long before the 2nd century) but due to the conservative approach of the people these musical compositions were learnt by word of mouth and compositions were taught by the teacher to the *sishya* and thus it went on generation after generation. One another fact that distinguishes Indian compositions from compositions of other countries is that Indian composers have always been men of a spiritual bent. They led a highly spiritual life and there is actual proof to show that these great devotees were men of sterling character, who spoke to God and to whom God spoke. Most of their compositions were composed through spiritual inspiration. They did not sit down with paper and pencil and say that they were going to make a composition. It was a spontaneous composition out of devotion to God. Technical musical compositions appeal generally to our intellect, while the non-technical ones appeal to our heart. The words of the musical compositions of the melodic group have a value independent of their music.

The Ashtapadi hymns of Jaya Deva come under the latter melodic group. They are more easily learnt by the ear. There are not in any of these, the intellectual development which was so conspicuous in that period. Many people began to write Ashtadadhis later similar to Gita Govinda, because it had so much appeal. Sri Chandra Sekhara Bharati of Kamakoti Peetam wrote Siva Ashtapadis on the same lines as Gita Govinda, the only difference being that instead of Radha and Krishna, it describes Siva and Parvati. Otherwise the songs are of the same style, and similar presentation.

There is an interesting story in connection with Jaya Deva. Jaya Deva's wife was called Padmavati, a very devoted wife, and he taught Ashtapadis to her

and she danced to them, in the temple. One day Jaya Deva in the process of his composition unconsciously wrote in an emotional fervour "Oh Radha, if you only have the kindness to put your lotus feet on my head. I will be blessed". Even as he wrote the words Jayadeva felt it was a blasphemy to put such words of total surrender in Krishna's mouth who was the supreme Lord. So he left the lines unfinished. The story goes that later when Jaya Deva was away, Sri Krishna Himself came in the form of Jaya Deva and asked Padmavati to bring the manuscript. It was brought and Krishna wrote on it the original piece written by Jaya Deva and disappeared. When Jaya Deva to his great surprise found the original piece as composed by him re-written he understood that it was Lord Krishna Himself who had written it, for Padmavati told him that he had come and completed it himself earlier. He admired the sterling devotion of his wife to whom Sri Krishna had given *darshan* thus in his form. He recognized her greatness and to perpetuate her name he prefixed her name before his at the end of the subsequent compositions.

The next composer was Chinniah. For a long time in India it was thought that it was respectable to write musical compositions only in the Sanskrit language. Just as in Europe people thought it was dignified to write only in Latin and to converse in Latin. Only later on the spoken language asserted itself. It was the same thing in India. Five hundred years ago important works were all in Sanskrit. Even the Tamil songs that were in existence made wide use of Sanskrit *Kavya* and *Vrittam*(Metre).

Chinniah lived in Tirupati and was the first person to write in the South Indian language of Telugu. It was he who gave the present form of *Kriti* compositions with divisions of *Pallavi, Anupallavi,* and *Charanam*. He was the originator of the *Bhajana paddhati* (system) which is the tradition of Bhajan singing which is still followed. Many bhajan compositions include an invocation to him. Even Sri Tyagaraja in his *Kritis* out of respect for Chinniah has adopted his mode of composition. He wrote more than a hundred songs. These were engraved in copper plates and as a protective measure they were buried. Just twenty years ago during an excavation these were discovered and the songs have now been published.

The next composer immediately after Chinniah was Purandara Dasa, a saint.

He is called *Karnataka Pitamaha* which means the grand-father of Karnatak music. It was he who for the first time taught music in a systematic form in graded lessons like *Swaravali, Alankaras, Gitas* etc. It is only from his period (1494-1564) that modern music commences .

Before he became a saint Purandara Dasa was a very rich man. He did not have a charitable disposition and was a miser. One day an old man came to him and asked for charity to perform his son's *Upanayana* (sacred-thread ceremony). Purandara Dasa refused to give anything and turned him out. The old man went to Purandara Dasa's wife. She was, a very charitable woman. She had no cash with her and so gave him her nose-screw. As misfortune would have it, the old man with his son went back to Purandara Dasa again to pawn the jewel. When Purandara Dasa saw the nose-screw he knew it was the one he had given his wife. In order to confirm his suspicious he sent a messenger to his wife asking her to send her nose screw. The poor woman was frightened and at a loss to know what to do and she almost tried to end her life. Then suddenly she found another nose-screw exactly similar to the one worn by her previously. The messenger took it and handed it to his master. Purandara Dasa could not believe his eyes. Both the jewels were identical in shape and quality. He was comparing them both very critically when lo and behold both merged and Purandara Dasa now knew that it was a miracle by the Lord Himself to teach him a lesson. He gave away everything he had for charity and became a mendicant. In one of his *kritis* he says "Have I not wasted thirty years of my life in vain without becoming a disciple or Dasa". Purandara Dasa is remembered primarily as a composer of *Gitams* which are simple compositions, although technical details are associated with his earlier compositions of music. Gitams are simple musical compositions in Sanskrit and *Bashanga*. *Bashanga* is a variety of Sanskrit. It is ninety percent like Sanskrit but here and there some terminations are different. This language is supposed to have been used in the court of Bhoja Raja for a long time. It has been used in Purandara Dasa's compositions and we find for about two centuries the *Sahitya* of music is in *Bashanga*. The origin of *Bashanga* is this. In the court of Bhoja Raja so many languages were spoken that they tried to evolve a common language. This common language, (Esperanto) is *Bashanga*.

Next we come to Arunagirinathar whose Tamil compositions are well-known in south India. His science on *Tala* or time measures is of special importance. He used different kinds of time measures in his music. In Indian music only 33, 108 and 175 *Talas* were used. Arunagirinathar's compositions are set in a variety of *Talas*. Other composers have attempted compositions in various ordinary *Talas*, but it is Arunagirinathar who has attempted compositions in difficult and intricate time measures.

The next composer who is held in great reverence is Tirthanarayana, the greatest writer of a Sanskrit opera called *Krishna Leela Tarangini*. There are many characters in this opera. It is in prose and song unlike other compositions and so everything is meant to be staged and he gives stage directions here and there. There is an interesting incident associated with his life also. Such incidents and miraculous events have transferred ordinary men into saints. Tirthanarayana was a great scholar in Sanskrit. One day he desired to go to his father-in-law's house. On his way he had to cross a river which was then in floods. He swam across but although he was a strong muscular man, he was carried away. Being a scholar he thought his end had come, but according to Indian tradition if a person takes to *Sanyas ashrama* in his life time he is able to gain one birth in his cycle of births. So to save himself, he pronounced some *Mantras* and became a *Sanyasi*. Later the flood subsided. He gathered enough strength and reached his father-in-law's house. His father-in-law welcomed him and Tirthanarayana thought that although he had taken *Sanyasa ashrama* nobody knew about it and he could go back to normal life. However when his wife came out to welcome him, she was lost in bewilderment, for she saw a *Mahapurush* (great man) and not her husband. Because she was a devoted woman she divined the halo around his face and his true form of a *Sanyasi* was revealed to her. She reported this to her parents. Tirthanarayana could contain himself no longer. He narrated how he took *Sanyas Ashrama* when he was being washed away by floods. He fell at his wife's feet and said, " You have become my Guru from today. I wanted to cheat the whole world but you saved me from becoming a great sinner. Thinking that if he remained there he would be molested, he proceeded to Northern India. He stayed in Andhra for a long time, where he wrote the immortal *Krishna Leela Tarangini*. In his dreams he was asked to proceed to his native place in Southern India for propagating his work. The people of the village

had a similar dream the day previous to his arrival that a great man was coming to their village and that they must receive him with due honour.

This village in Tanjore district, now known as Varahoor, was formerly called Bhupatirajapuram. Because Tirhthanarayana Yati was guided to this palace by a Varaha (pig) the village was later named Varahaoor. He stayed there for a long time and popularised his works. They are being sung even today without people knowing that it is part of *Krishna Leela Tarangini*. It is said that it was sung in the court of Sri Krishna reminding him of his incarnation in this world. A certain song of *Krishna Leela Tarangini* is said to have been sung by Brahma in praise of Sri Krishna.

Next we come to Bhadrachalam Ramadas, the brightest personality before Sri Tyagaraja. Sri Tyagaraja himself has acknowledged his indebtedness to Ramadas in some of his songs. Sri. Ramadas was a tahsildar of Badrachalam (Nizam's state). Even as in the case of Manickavachagar he utilized the state revenues to renovate the temple of Rama in Badrachalam. Whether it is just or unjust I leave it to you to conjecture. We have in the history of South India two great persons who have utilized state revenues for renovation of temples, a serious crime, however laudable the purpose. Ramadas was put in prison for twelve years. During his prison life he composed many songs and these songs full of devotion are sung throughout South India. The story goes that finally one day Sri Rama and Lakshmana came in the guise of servants of Ramadas, disturbed the sleep of the Nizam and said that they had come to discharge the debt of their master to the ruler. Lost in bewilderment, the Nizam took the money and gave them the discharge receipt. The two showed the receipt to the gaoler, released Ramadas and disappeared. It was a puzzle to Ramadas but he realized that it was Sri Rama and Lakshmana who had settled his debt and obtained his release. The golden coins that obtained his release are still to be seen in Bhadrachalam.

The next important composer is Kshetragna, whose greatest compositions are in the form of *Padams* dealing with Indian philosophy. This was the time when apostles of different schools of thought were advocating various methods for reaching God. There was the Bhakti School (devotion) and there was the school

of Madhura Bhava (worshipping God in the Nayaka-Nayaki bhava as human lovers). There were powerful advocates also in Bengal for this type of worship. Chaitanya was the great champion of the school of *Madhura Bhava.* There were many other composers who advocated the Bhakti cult and *padams* came to be used. The *Padam* usually had a double meaning: outwardly it expressed *Sringara* (love) but inwardly it had a sublime meaning. There is a tradition that Kshetragna took his cue from Jaya Deva.

We are now coming to the modern age of *Kritis* and *Kirtanas*. Among the great musician-saints and great composers none is greater or holier and dearer to the people than Sri Tyagaraja. He was an inspired composer and musical compositions simply flowed from his mouth. He did not sit and write down musical compositions. His *Kirtanas* are so much revered that they are called *Tyagopanishad.* Just as we have three sides for a triangle, he had three sections for his songs: consisting of *Pallavi, Anupallavi* and *Charanam*. These were embellished by additional *Sangatis* or music phrases known as *Chitta swarams*. It is similar to the solfa-system of European music. The singing of solfa system is common to delineate the *Raga*. *Kriti* compositions are combined with *Chitta swarams* to enrich them. When pieces are sung sometimes these solfa phrases are interspersed with *tala*, and, *jatis* which lend additional charm.

Sometimes separate passages of *Sahitya* are set for *Chitta swaras* (solfa passages) which are called *Swara Sahitya*. *Chitta Swaram* is sung both after *anupallavi* and after the end of *charanams*.

The development of music was often in the hands of royalty in ancient times. Bavaria became one of the seats of development of music in Europe because Bavarian Kings were inspired poets. Similarly in India both Hindu and Muslim rulers were musicians, musicians who honoured music. Shahjahan, it is said, honoured his court-musician by presenting him with gold equal to his weight. Akbar was a musician himself and an ardent lover of music. Gopal Naik who was in the court of Akbar was similarly honoured. Aurangazab alone among the Moghul rulers was different. There is an interesting story told about him. When he ascended the throne the first thing he did was to dismiss the palace musicians. These poor

musicians with a view to register their protest against his action took out a procession, a mock funeral, right in front of the palace so as to be seen by Aurangazeb. Aurangazeb asked his minister what it was and the musicians who accompanied the pyre said it was music which was dead, and they were carrying it to the burial ground. Aurangazeb on that occasion seems to have said "Ask them to bury the body so deep that I will never hear anything of her "again". His reign marked the decline of the Moghul empire. Culture is one of the gifts of God and no ruler has the right to insult inspired artists. In South India royal musicians were honoured. One of the ways in which they were honoured was by adorning them with gold and silver and other costly gifts. They were also honoured by taking them in decorated palanquins like royalty in public procession. Ramasami Dikshitar was one of those who was honoured in this manner.

Ragamalikas are compositions where variety is attempted by the change of *ragas* in a single composition. *Tala-malika* is that in which variety is attempted by similar changes in *Tala* patterns. *Raga-Tala Malikas* are those compositions in which both the *raga* and the *tala* change in succession which are intricate and difficult. A monumental composition of this type of *Raga-Tala Malika* was composed by Ramaswami Dikshitar which takes more than two hours to sing. *Swara-Akshara Malika* are compositions in which the *Swara* and *Sahitya* syllables are synchronised. They usually consist of long passages of intricate *swara* patterns.

There are also what are called *Manipravala* compositions in which the *Sahitya* is composed in several languages, but nevertheless makes complete sense. For example there is a popular song in which one part is in Telugu and the other in Tamil. This song was sung by the devotees of Tygaraja in praise of Tyagaraja.

Such musical gymnastics were, however kept to a minimum and the compositions of the great saint singers of South India on the whole were deeply classical and spiritual.

- South Indian Cultural Association, Patna - 1976

Inaugural Address by Smt.Rukmini Devi at 51st Annual Conference of the Music Academy.

President and members of the Music Academy !

I must first of all offer my thanks to the Academy for having asked me to inaugurate this year's Conference and Festival. A minister, an industrialist or some eminent and influential person might have been more useful. It is an honour and pleasure for me to accept this invitation so kindly given to me by the new President Mr. Sundaram Iyer for whom I have the greatest regard.

The Academy is growing from strength to strength with many aspects for promoting Indian Culture. Its publications and research work as well as the encouragement it has been giving to young artists have been noteworthy. Our outstanding musicians have been honoured and made Presidents of Annual Conferences when the title of 'Sangita Kalanidhi' has been conferred on them. These Annual Festivals have been outstanding and are very well known and deeply appreciated by many connoisseurs and devotees of Indian Culture, particularly by myself. I must of course pay my tributes to the outstanding Presidents that this Academy has had from its earliest days beginning with Dr.U.Rama Rao, Sri.K.V.Krishnaswami Aiyar, Sangita Kalanidhi T.L.Venkatarama Iyer, Sri.T.S.Rajam and the present President. I would be failing in my duty if I do not make a special mention of the great scholar Dr.V.Raghavan to whose ability, knowledge and powers of organisation, the Academy owes much of this success. His colleagues have also done yeoman service.

I was one of the earliest members of the Music Academy and I am thankful to see it flourishing and doing such useful work in the field of Culture.

I am really happy that this year when I am inaugurating the Festival, the "Sangita Kalanidhi' title is being conferred on Smt.M.L.Vasanthakumari who is an eminent musician and has won a name in our country for her pure and traditional music.

Music, according to me, is the essence of civilization. As music is, so is civilization. The influence of music is impossible to describe as its divine effect upon civilization is so subtle that our physical consciousness cannot comprehend it except in terms of the pleasure it gives to the listeners as well as to the musicians whose creative genius is stimulated by such listeners as are understanding and appreciative. Our *sastras* have spoken so much about music. But music cannot be understood by the study of it. Like mediation, only the one who experiences it can know what it is. For me music is beyond sound and words. Just as the voice or an instrument is the vehicle of music, so is a musician a vehicle through whom this divine influence pours. The musician and the audience are equally important. Yet for complete fulfillment, the quality and attitude of both have to be on such a level that the Highest can express itself. A true musician never thinks about himself except as being sensitive to the response of the audience. I have been fortunate from my childhood to have heard the giants of Carnatic music. Like a vision of the Himalayan mountains, even a few moments of their music are unforgettable. Though I have heard such artists as Thirukodikaval Krishna Iyer, Poochi Iyengar, Veena Vaidyanatha Iyer and many others, their music is only a magnificent memory of my childhood. Later when I heard and had the privilege of listening to Veena Dhanam, Mysore Vasudevachar, Tiger Varadachariar, Veena Krishnamachariar, Mazhavarayanendal Subbarama Bagavathar, Ariyakudi Ramanjua Aiyenger, the Karaikudi Brothers, Maharajapuram Viswanatha Iyer, Papanasam Sivan, Rajaratnam, Veeruswami and others, I listened with greater intellectual understanding that held me spellbound. As one grows older and listens more and more, one listens with one's heart as well, for I believe that the physical, emotional and intellectual have their own subtle ears. Ultimately the heart merges into the melody that brings a 'marriage' between the higher and lower self.

All *rasikas* expect musicians to inspire them but I think that the audience also must inspire the musicians. For this, sensitivity, reverence and receptivity are

most important. Of course technical understanding, both of *Sahitya* and *Sangeeta* are essential. I find often modern audiences are more and more interested in intellectual acrobatics in classical music and this is one of the reasons many feel that our classical music becomes stereotyped and stale. It is only when we go beyond the intellect that we can reach the perennial well of music. Unfortunately, musicians depend so much on numbers in the audience. It is only rarely that they would rather have fewer audiences than popularity.

So many things in modern civilization are dragging our art into low depths. One is money, the others are publicity and popularity. I remember in my childhood great musicians used to sing or play at a wedding or in temples or on other auspicious occasions. Every one gave gifts like shawls, grains, jewels and money voluntarily. There was no question of rates or charges. Nowadays, the musicians demand and the people do not give voluntarily either. Many would prefer to pay for other entertainments or pleasures rather than to an artist, One important factor is that we have not yet realised that a great artist must be respected and honoured at least as much as a scientist or a minister. Very few realise that an artist's contribution to the nation is more long-lasting and forms an essential gift. As food is to the body, so is art to the soul. In Western countries, especially in countries like Russia, an artist is welcomed like a king or a queen and they take great pride in their gifted citizens. In India today, we also appreciate them but generally only when they have gone abroad and have become famous in the West, We still suffer from an inferiority complex and an essential ignorance. Also I have noticed that when foreign artists perform in India, the audiences are great, they are silent, disciplined and ready with applause. An Indian artist is hardly applauded while even a third rate artist from abroad is called for encores. It hurts me to see this disregard. Not only this, I also feel that any one who sings or plays or dances deserves the quiet attention of the people. Otherwise it is not easy for a musician or dancer to perform. Day after day, continuous practice is necessary to maintain a high level. Yet there is disregard by an audience from whom the minimum requirement demanded is attention and respect at least for the effort. Concerts at our marriages are the worst examples of this kind of disrespect. Musicians

have to earn and they must also have receptive audiences to communicate to. It is a pathetic sight to see the music concert as an occasion for long conversations.

One important aspect of music is the purity of sound. Just as we love to hear the voices of birds in their purity, if the musicians' voices are well modulated and trained, it is a joy to hear them. Instead, we hear strange voices through the medium of the loud speaker which is generally - unncessarily and unnaturally - loud. We all have the ability to talk - and India excels in this. Is it not a sign of civilization to speak softly and not too much?. To me it is a form of egotism to hear oneself speak so much. We have become so used to this that we are no more sensitive to the ugliness of the over amplification provided by the loud-speaker.

As civilization is, so is art and as art is, so is civilization. Music being the highest refining influence it is important that every school and college should give importance to the art. It is not enough to train musicians or artists. There has to be proper musical education by educating the young to appreciate. Unfortunately, there is an idea that girls' schools need music teachers and not boy's schools. In fact, I am surprised to find that all kinds of subjects like biology, science and even what is called drawing are more important for passing examinations than music. Everyone cannot perform, as this capacity depends on the natural gift of the student, but everyone can be taught to understand and study and know simple songs. Why is music not part of the curriculum in all schools?. Every boy and girl needs music and young people are essentially musical. The first aspect of music that is instinctive and has immediate response is rhythm. I find that even the so called savage enjoys this. In countries where there is no classical music, rhythmic instruments and dances play a great part in their lives as this brings them joy. From this alone has been born the jazz, rock and roll etc. This type of music has captured the films and I regret this has captured our younger generations as well. The mixture in India of orchestral music and devotional songs is to me a strange combination. We elders and educationists particularly, have done nothing to help our young in their demand for this spiritual need. Music does not mean only the classical mode, as we have in India a rich tradition of folk and other types of music. Every activity in India, even drawing water from a well

or ploughing the field was accompanied by songs. The coolie, the fisherman, the potter and even the beggar sang. They were beautiful but now we never hear them but we hear in plenty something which is neither Western nor Indian. Surely we should be proud of our great traditions that will capture the hearts of the entire world if only we know and feel what is beautiful and realise that in art there are only two categories, good and bad.

There are two other points needing our attention. One is the training of the voice. This is much neglected today. Secondly having developed the voice, it is necessary to sing like true Indians and not like Western opera stars. We cannot bring out the beauties of our ragas by imitating the West. Each country has its own genius. Our country's unique gift is that a musician has to be creative. *Ragas, swara* singing, *pallavi, thanam* etc., are creative and the songs that are sung are interpretative. While we sing a song by a composer like Tyagaraja, not only must we be true to the original mood but we can also be interpreting this mood in our own way, giving a new meaning according to the musician's imagination and feeling.

The last and most important thing to emphasize is religious education through music and art. In India all art including drama, poetry, music, dance etc., was practised in the temple as they were as important as offering incense and flowers. Devotion has many forms of expression and it is a good thing that temple festivals still include concerts as they used to do. The temples are our true art centers and should play a great part in encouraging true art and training young students, women and men in traditional temple arts. Our Maharajas were also great patrons of art and we have to be grateful to them for the legacy of great artists who are even now helping India. But what about the next generation and who are the patrons of art and artists of the new age? We cannot expect the Government to take their place as Governments are run by those who mostly have not had traditional education and artistic training. It is now the responsibility of the temples, artists and educationists to give the leadership along right lines. While Governments can help and support, ultimately it is not man that can inspire but the Divine powers that shower. Their Grace upon man.

The Art of Seeing Art

It is not easy to describe the art of seeing Art because, fundamentally, there is no such thing as "seeing" art. Art is a creative force of the response from within and is, essentially, a symbol of the development of man. When Art is not created by man but by nature, from which comes all inspiration, then it is an outer and a visible form of Divinity. Saints and poets talk of seeing God but forget that in the life around us we also see Him, hear Him and feel Him. Nature is the direct manifestation of that Divinity. Its unconscious influence on humanity has its permanent value.

Birds and animals respond to the beauty of nature and find their freedom in it. In nature they grow physically and even inwardly because they themselves are manifestations of the Divine and their consciousness has not moved away from nature. When it comes to the human kingdom, only in childhood is humanity nearer to God. One can see this in the child's ready response to beauty, to flowers, to the sound of birds and the movement of animals. It is as if all these are a reminder of the Heaven he has just left behind. But, as human beings grow into manhood or maturity, there arises the problem of learning to appreciate, to understand, see, hear, feel, and touch. It is as if they have again to learn that which we they have forgotten.

As soon as unconscious perception disappears the soul withdraws, as if the child of the soul, the body, has to learn to grow of its own accord. It is then through the divine grace of God that the body is given the opportunity to grow through the channels of the five senses. So, the mature man is, in a sense, a child, for he has to re-learn. His capacity to learn and the extent of his learning will depend upon the greatness of his inner response to exterior phenomena.

Take for example an ordinary man who passes through a forest. He may see the trees and the nature around him, but beyond the slight stirring of consciousness which comes to him in the form of pleasure, nature has no message for him. On the other hand, the poet or a highly developed individual would find, from the inspiration that comes to him through the beauty of the forest, a sudden reminder of the days of his oneness with the Divine. It is this awakened response that we call creative genius. This creative genius may express itself in the form of poetry, music or any of the other arts.

Therefore, Art is in reality, a reflection of man's soul which in itself is a part of nature. That visible God which we call nature is essential to stir the invisible God within. It is only when this invisible God is awake that it is possible, not only to create works of art but even to see. Thus, "seeing rightly" is as much an expression of creative genius as when an artist who is a master of technique, produces something of permanent value. This is the reason why the great sages of India have pronounced Art to be a divine expression and that, through Art, the spirituality of man can be developed. The Yogi has to learn to control his five senses and to transmute them until they become unified within himself with that which he calls God.

To be an artist is basically the same as hearing music, which is an attunement of the soul to sound. The creation of great poetry is, similarly, the attunement of the soul to sound which is brought down to expression in terms of language. So is the dance an attunement to the poetry of physical beauty. It is only when this attunement takes place, whether consciously or unconsciously, that we can truly "see" Art. We should not see art only with the eyes. It is that which is beyond the eyes that sees beauty. This is why there is such infinite variety of opinions as to the value of a work of art. Opinions vary according to the development of the power to see in each individual.

So, it is more important for the spectator to contact the feeling of the Art than even to learn about technique. If the spectator is not capable of being inspired, then to him the greatest art will remain uninspiring. When people ask how to understand a particular work of art, it is because they are unable to

respond to it. They are unable to respond because they have not built the response upon right emotion. A certain hardness in life, a hardness of relationship to the environment, too critical a faculty of the intellect, these finally result in the killing of the right emotion. This destruction finally removes all sensitivity. The lack of sensitivity leads to the lack of feeling. Lack of feeling shuts off from us the power to see. It is this which prevents the majority of people from appreciating beauty. The development of the power to see must begin in childhood, for it is then that this power is strong. The human being must be helped to develop a capacity that he already possesses at birth instead of being subjected to conditions which kill that capacity, as is unfortunately the case in modern days.

It is not merely a knowledge of technique that matters when we see a dance or hear a piece of music. I have often heard people say when they see dancing that they do not understand the language of the songs nor even the music, nor the gestures. My reply to them is that it is not the lack of knowledge of these things that prevents them from being able to appreciate the dance, but the absence of a more basic understanding. If there is some response through feeling, then appreciation automatically comes. For example, I certainly think a knowledge of the dance in all its aspects greatly helps, but to understand truly many other essential qualities are necessary. I find in my own experience that an ordinary, simple individual, old fashioned and unsophisticated as he is, not only responds to the art better but rarely complains of his lack of knowledge. It is usually the intellectuals who say they do not know the *mudras* or any one of the other special aspects of the dance. I have heard many North Indians say that they would appreciate Bharata Natya better if they knew South Indian music or South Indian languages. In South India, a Tamilian wants Tamil songs and an Andhra, Telegu songs. All this is perfectly natural and knowledge of the language and music certainly aids appreciation. But, in reality, dance should not depend either on the language of the songs or on elaborate costumes. These are mainly additional qualifications. The art itself is the spirit and the atmosphere created by the artist.

This creation of an atmosphere becomes difficult under the conditions of modern life because of intellectual sophistication and the delving merely into the forms of the dance. When the spirit cannot be felt, the form has to substitute for the spirit and artificiality has to masquerade as beauty. Today, the artificiality of form and the glitter of unnecessary movements have become important because art after all is an expression of civilisation and modern civilisation is based upon the artificial. If Indian dance is to be understood, India must be understood. Indian dance is as much an expression of India as a tree is a part of the soil on which it grows. Of all our arts the dance seems to me the most universal of expressions, for it combines visual beauty, with music, and drama. Therefore to understand the dance, it is even more important to feel the spirit of all these arts.

Many modern people who wish to become dancers say they will have nothing to do with religion. To me, this is a contradiction in terms. If we do not believe in religion we may as well not dance Bharata Natya or practice any other of our great arts. Indian dance is a creation of Yoga. In India, there are many styles of dancing, Kathakali, Manipuri, Kathak and Bharata Natya. Besides these there are many other variations of classical dancing, dance dramas, folk dances, etc. Each is an expression of Indian thought based upon our ancient literature, philosophy and religion. To develop a new form of Indian dance, will mean a new creation in every way; new music, new technique including new movements, new mudras, new poetry, new ornaments, stories etc. Perhaps something new is possible in the hands of a genius or a great rishi. If this new dance comes through any other source, as it is trying to come today, we can have the satisfaction of feeling that India has created something new, but it will definitely be the death of beauty, the death of India, for there is nothing more dangerous than the leadership of the ignorant.

Every single hand movement in dance has a meaning. This can be taught in schools and might almost become a common language. Every foot movement has a purpose. This will create strength in the nation in its uncompromising stand for reality. The great traditional background of India, the epic stories of

the Ramayana and Mahabharatha are essential expressions of Indian dance. When the birth of such a thing is forced, what results is neither dance nor religion but the expression of the unnatural growth of an immature individual. Therefore, true maturity of the soul is needed to see the dance. The seeing must be simple, imbued with deep feeling, and informed not only with a knowledge of the dance but an understanding of India, her life and her background. There must be an identification with the great stories of India and with the psychology of the Indian mind. With this understanding and with the sound of the music it is possible to be lifted on wings of great inspiration, which will take us to the heights of realisation, and a greater understanding of this noble art.

- article to Guru Guha Gana Sabha Souvenir 6th August 1974

The Spirit of Art

Art is a very broad word which covers many fields. Usually when people speak of art they refer to paintings, sculptures, and other examples of visual art. From my point of view every aspect of life is included in the word art - the way we dress, the way we speak, they way we live. Art is music, dancing, stage-craft, but it is also life. Most people make the mistake of regarding art as merely form.

We see a painting of a tree or a landscape and we say "That is art". But where does the artist get his idea from? His head, his heart - the root of art is himself. Art is within ourselves.

The sculptor takes for his model a child, a woman, a man, usually a human being. Why? Because human beings represent the essence of art. Of all creations human beings are the highest. There is a much greater art than my dancing or someone else's sculpture. There is the art of the One artist who has created you and me. How much more difficult to create a work of art that breathes and moves, that talks and walks, than something that is still and lifeless.

It is more important to think about the spirit of Art than its expressions, because unless you feel the spirit of art it is impossible to understand the expressions. To understand art, you must understand life, you must look back into the greatness of past civilizations, you must stretch your imagination till it envelopes the whole being. You must enter into the very heart and spirit of the country which you are studying, into the temperament of its people, if you want to understand its greatness.

Wherever there has been greatness in a civilization, there has been greatness in its creation of beauty. All great civilizations have had great art. When the civilization declines, the art becomes automatic and lifeless.

Take the civilization of ancient Egypt. That civilization had a marvelous art with a fine sense of proportion. There was so much emphasis upon life and the geometrical aspect of forms that even human beings were represented always by geometrical lines. Such art had its own beauty, and because the civilization was so great everything had a vitality of expression.

Greek Art in its earlier days was influenced by the Egyptian. Then, as the Greeks developed their own civilization, they began to develop the fundamentals of their own art for one of the keynotes of creative art is originality. In Greek Art you will find a marvellous sense of proportion, and added to that is a sense of grandeur. They emphasized the beauty of the human form. Their ideal was the beautiful human body. They did not lay so much stress on the development of the intelligence. The result was that the people of Greece gradually began to look like those beautiful statues. The artists had created a form which expressed itself through the people of the country.

It was the same in ancient India. Modern India has yet to create her art. It is just in its beginning. The disastrous mistake in modern India is that there is an attempt to copy everything that is Western. How can we copy the West? Even if we change our saris into dresses and our sandals into shoes, and our beautiful Indian home into imitation Western homes, can we change our faces, our noses, our ears, the colour of our skin? Surely not, unless we seek out the plastic surgeon!. There is beauty in every type and we are beautiful when we are true to ourselves.

Take modern art in the West, as, for example, as it is now in Germany. There you find a new school of architecture which has created houses that look like bombs, like machines - very smooth, shiny, cold, hard.

Many years ago, when I visited the art galleries of the West I saw that they contained many pictures that were crude and unrefined. There was an utter lack of the sense of proportion. The underlying theory was that, since there was beauty in everything, you must show ugly things to prove that they could be beautiful. I do not mean there are not many beautiful creations of art in the West, but I am referring to a particular phase that has been sweeping

through many of the Western arts. When I saw such vulgarity and crudeness, I felt, if there is art like this there is going to be war.

In India some of our greatest works of art are to be found in our old architecture, exemplified in the South Indian temples. Perhaps we do not realize how great these really are, because we do not have famous people coming and telling us that they are great, and we depend so much on other people for ideas and opinions of art.

Not only is our Indian art to be found in the massive temples, but we have extraordinary beauty in the things we use every single day. Look at the wonderful shapes the potter makes. He is simple, natural, unsophisticated, and he expresses himself in simple, unsophisticated, beautiful art; But so called educated Indians want art from afar. The further away it is from home, the more wonderful we believe it to be! Look at our old bell metal vessels that we use for cooking rice and dhal. In European homes they will put it in their drawing rooms for flowers. I have actually seen it in my friends' homes, and have asked, "Why are you using this vessel? My grandmother has many of them in her home". But nowadays we do not see them in Indian homes, for we have taken to saucepans.

Take our own Indian sari. The person who invented the sari was a brilliant genius, one of the greatest of artists. Think of one single piece of cloth with which, without the use of pins or buttons, you can produce the varied costumes of Madras, Bengal, Benares, or Bombay. Think of this one single piece of cloth adaptable to both men's and women's use. Take the costumes of other nations. They can be beautiful, but they can also be ugly. Why? It depends upon the artist who cuts and fits them. But the sari is always graceful.

In India one sees on the women in the fields beautiful blues and reds and other marvelous colours. You know they say that India is a wonderful land, because it is a land of colours, and artists come here seeking our colours. But let us imagine an artist landing today in the Port of Madras. Would he not say "Why we have browns in London and here are browns in Madras. We have grey in London and here I find grey in Madras. There is some excuse, for such colours in our country

for our country is cold and we cannot wash our clothes so often. But why do they not wear colours here? Though it is cold in Rajputana and Kathiawar, even in the desert women wear the most wonderful colours, and in South India where we have brilliant sunshine, we should wear still more marvellous colours.

Art is life. It is character. People think of art as if it were something far away from themselves. You may think of me as a dancer, an artist, but are you not going to be artist also? Have you not some art in you? My idea is that everyone is an artist, for everyone responds to beauty. Some people may paint pictures but when you are in the store and say, "Oh, what a nice sari that is," are you not responding to beauty? When you pick up a fountain pen and say, "I like this fountain pen", have you not automatically made your choice because you responded to beauty? We must help that desire to unfold in our pupils, so that with it may come good taste.

We have to be afire with beauty. We have to open our eyes and see it everywhere. Someone who is an artist may have to show us the way, but afterwards, our eyes having been opened, we can decide for ourselves. India is a land of most remarkable beauty. We must learn to se it throughout the whole of India.

Many people are making new things; but if they do not know art, what is the use of perpetuating new forms of ugliness. What we want is new creations of beauty. Take the wonderful North Indian architecture of the Muhammadan style. Then the wonderful Ajanta frescoes of the Buddhist period. These are beautiful, because they are not copies of something that had gone before. In this art is the very spirit, the very soul of India.

In all our arts, whether dancing, music, architecture, painting, sculpture, or just cooking utensils, we have our own genius. Look at our old brass lamps. Today they cannot even be copied well. Our old Indian bronzes are museum pieces. Think of the marvellous statue of Nataraja. It is not merely its beautiful proportions that make it what it is - there is soul in it, it is alive, spiritual. It is that which makes art. You may produce a perfect form, a perfect face, but if there is no life in it, it is not art.

It is important to remember that all the arts are related. What dance is in movement, music is in sound, painting is in colour, sculpture and architecture are

in form. Architecture has been called "frozen music". Sculpture is "frozen dance". Whether dance arose from sculpture or sculpture arose from dance no one has finally decided. Both are one.

What are the special features of the Bharata Natya that make it different from other forms of dance? The first and foremost difference is that it has soul. It is not an empty form. Bharata Natya is pure. It is not a form of dance into which vulgarity can be easily introduced, and that is why I have been doing my best to eliminate this foreign element which had crept in but it is not the dance that is vulgar but the dancer who so misuses it.

Through Bharata Natya you can talk to your audience for, within its movements there is a language, through which you can express anything you like. In the *Mudras* we have a language of the hands that is not seen anywhere in the western world. One of the most beautiful forms of western dance is the classical ballet. It is really fine, but it lacks this language of the hands, although in modern times they are tyring to fill the lack.

Western dance also does not have so much expression of the face. In Bharata Natya all the nine different emotions with their many modifications can be expressed; passion, humour, pathos, fury, heroism, terror, disgust, wonder, tranquility, pride, jealousy, happiness. It has been said, " you cannot call it dancing, if your eyes and face do not dance with your body. To be a great dancer you have to be a great actress".

The Indian dance is the merging of rhythmic movement with music, philosophy and spiritual ideals. You cannot separate these. While the body is doing beautiful movements, the feet are beating the *tala*, the hands are talking the language of the dance and the face is expressing emotion. All this is taking place simultaneously. The dancer who does not know music cannot be a good dancer, particularly with regard to Bharata Natya, for Bharata Natya is music represented in form, and in rhythm. When one studies old Sanskrit books on the dance, one marvels that so long ago they worked out a complete system of movements and facial expressions in which every form of human emotion can be conveyed.

Bharata Natya can never be discarded as old, because it is perennial. The

unfortunate thing is that those who now use it have ceased to be creative as their predecessors were. To be a truly great dancer of Bharata Natya, you must not only know about stage arrangements, costuming, music, and the dance itself, but you must study the history of the dance to know its true meaning. Very few dancers study nowadays. Only when all these arts are combined into one, only when all the arts are perfectly blended, can there be expressed the dance as it should be expressed. Only then can the dance become creative.

The artist who has studied deeply and who can embody within himself or herself the spirit of Bharata Natya, can convey the essence of the scriptures to those who find the great books too deep, too learned for them. Not everybody can be a yogi or a very great saint, but through form and beauty we can express all philosophy all religion, which can be understood by all. You do not really need books. I am sure you would rather see me dance than hear me give a lecture and I would rather dance than lecture. Why? Because beauty is the easiest way to express the Spirit, only we have not realized that it can be the same channel as words. People always want to be talking in words, when it is quite enough to see, to hear, and to feel. That is what the dance is meant to do.

When the dancer knows and feels and dances with the fullest possible expression, she does not imitate a character she is portraying, but becomes one with it. Not only does she herself live the part, but so also does the audience. If I could perfectly portray to you Sri Krishna, you would also begin to feel as if you were Sri Krishna. If I can make you feel as I feel, then I am a good artist. Therefore the artist in a way is a very dangerous person, for if the dance becomes something vulgar, see what a reaction it will have on the audience, for such a dancer could lead them to vulgarity, though quite unconsciously. No one would realise that the dance had done it, nor would they give credit to the dance if they had been influenced to the good.

The South Indian dance is very difficult and very strenuous, though the good dancer will never give any indication of its difficulty while performing it. When I warn my students of its difficulty and ask them if they are prepared to endure it, they say confidently that they are, but later they come and say, "Oh my leg aches so. Is it always going to be like this?". They do not like it, because it is hard work. While this

dance is not for all to do, and not all bodies are able to stand the strain, it is an art for all to appreciate. All can be artists by expressing and appreciating beauty.

How can you learn to appreciate? Even though understanding the technique helps it is not enough. No one can appreciate art unless there is an inner response to beauty. All over South India there are people doing Bharata Natya but the audience rarely is able to discriminate.

For the dance to be truly beautiful, there must be beauty of form, there must be gracefulness, and I should say that a small percent is conveyed by technique. You have to work and work and work to make it look easy and your audience must never see the suffering that you have endured to achieve this for the dancer represents joy. We do need to expresses joy in this unhappy world where suffering is everywhere. It is wonderful to see a dance which radiates joy.

In Bharata Natya we must have a blend of the new and the old. We must follow our glorious traditions in dance but we must not stop there. While we follow the happy medium and not discard the old, we should innovate creatively to add to its beauty. If we want to be expressive and creative, we must add and not subtract.

There is another striking difference between Bharata Natya and the classical dance of the west. Much is done in the west for the audience. The stage arrangements, the lighting, everything is done to impress and win the public, the dancer dances for the public. But in Bharata Natya the public dances with you. You dance and they participate in it. You do not dance with the thought of showmanship. You have dedicated yourself to an ideal, and having given yourself to the ideal, you find it easy to express yourself in Bharata Natya. That is why I chose Bharata Natya, though I had studied many forms of dance - I found that through it I could most easily express philosophical and spiritual ideals. The background and the foundation has already been made. It is easy to add the superstructure. The path is clear. It is easy to continue along the way.

- from a lecture in Kalakshetra.

Cultural Festivals

When India was under the domination of the British and we worked for her freedom, the mental picture we had of free India was of a motherland where Indians would not only be free to rule their own country but that India would arise as a great nation by educating her young citizens along Indian lines. Our arts at that time were almost forgotten and we were as ignorant of the great arts as of the artists of our country. Since India attained freedom there has been a tremendous awakening in regard to the glory of our culture which the whole world admires. Unfortunately our education has remained as dry and un-Indian as ever, and in some respects is even more westernized than before. We have to realize that the cultural life of the country cannot be promoted without its roots. It must permeate the home, the family, the life of the people as a whole and particularly the education of our children.

If we really believe in our culture and its value both in national and individual lives, we have to make every effort to understand not only the exterior form of that culture but the spirit that gave birth to the form. The essential feature of India's art is that it is founded on a spiritual outlook. The uniqueness of this outlook is that it is not limited to what we may strictly call religion. In India there is no religion which is apart from our daily lives. Therefore it played a part in every aspect of life and the creation of beauty was and is as much a spiritual expression as worship in a temple. This idea made our religion universal and therefore it permeated every aspect of life and gave opportunities for every expression and talent.

Indian festivals are among the best expressions of our culture because they reflect the character of our people. What every individual wants most in life is happiness. Therefore there is no festival which evokes sorrow, at least in Hinduism. An all pervading joy which includes every type of human being whether old, young,

poor or rich is their general characteristic. Generally speaking, Indian festivals combine three qualities-the spiritual, so that they are inspiring, the beautiful, so that spiritual ideas are made visible through beauty, and the joyous. Even when spiritual ideas are forgotten, the qualities of beauty and joy remain because as human beings we cannot do without them.

Certain Hindu festivals are connected with seasons and harvests, like *Holi* with which the people in the North welcome the *Spring, Onam* in Kerala and *Pongal* in the rest of South India to celebrate the harvest. What is beautiful in the celebration of *Pongal* is that it includes the animal kingdom as well. Generally only cattle are decorated and worshipped on *Mattu Pongal* day though the significance is that cattle worshipped includes symbolic worship of all creatures.

Then there are festivals which are of a purely religious nature such as *Ganesh Puja, Rama Navami, Krishna Jayanti* etc. Added to the two categories mentioned above are the temple festivals which are such a notable feature of South Indian life. These festivals take place on dates which vary for the different temples and are usually based upon some incident in the "Sthala Purana" or the story of the origin of these temples. Festivals like *Ganesh Chathurti*, *Rama Navami, Krishnashtami* and some others have a special connection with the home. They are also celebrated in temples and are occasions for displays of art, music and religious discourses and other functions which are organised during these occasions, but it is the home which is of primary importance, and pujas at home are considered essential for the spiritual well being of the family.

Perhaps among the most important of all religious festivals is the *Navaratri* which ends in *Ayudha puja* and *Vijayadasami*. This ten day festival is dedicated to the goddess as the embodiment of the three aspects of feminine power, Durga (embodiment of courage) Lakshmi (embodiment of beauty and prosperity) and Saraswati (embodiment of learning and wisdom). This festival is the worship of the divine mother in all her manifestations. In the South, this worship is complete and comprehensive. For those who have made a full study of religion and philosophy it is of the deepest spiritual significance. As is typical of Hinduism, everything is symbolical and during the first seven days, in some religious groups, young girl

children are worshipped as being the purest human manifestations of the goddess. The *KOLU* or doll festival in which all life is represented, even toys are included among the things placed on the altar. Thus, the nine days of worship become great social events as well. Women and children gather to meet in different homes and sing before the altar. The ninth day is dedicated to Saraswati which underlines the concept that work is worship. Books and musical instruments are worshipped as a visible manifestation of the goddess of learning as also tools and implements of every kind. On the tenth day, they are all removed from the place of puja by the worshippers and a symbolic start is made by using them. This is the day of *Vidhyarambam* and is also the day of victory being very specially associated with the victory of Sri Rama over Ravana.

Navaratri or *Durga Puja* is magnificently celebrated especially by the Indian royal Princes when the ruler ceremonially ascends the throne afresh after worshipping it as the throne of the goddess. In olden days each state had its own special tradition of celebration. Now this celebration continues only in the Mysore State and the Maharaja who takes a *Deeksha* (or vow) leads an ascetic life during this period, sleeping on the floor, fasting, performing various rituals and ceremonials and ascending the throne each day at stated times. He is the vehicle of the goddess and therefore it is in fact she who ascends the throne. The *Vijayadasami* procession in Mysore is exquisite to see and is inspiring in every way. Mysore alone has preserved this tradition even in modern times. This festival is something uniquely Indian, and if one wishes to see and feel the atmosphere of the festivals and processions as described in the Ramayana and other ancient books, we can see it today only in Mysore. I remember such a festival in the Pudukkottah State which used to be outstandingly beautiful. But alas!, it has disappeared now and so have many of our old but beautiful ceremonies, pujas, functions and festivals. How I wish the Indian rulers of the States now living, though they do not have ruling power, would revive these great festivals as expressions of spiritual, social and artistic value. I wish that the Government and people of today also realized their importance for true artistic revival can only take place when this is understood. In the past wonderful art forms developed through temple festivals as for example, *Kuravanjis, Bhagavata Mela, Kathakali, Krishnanattam, Koodiattam, Chakkiar*

Koothu, Ramlila, Kuchipudi and other dance dramas. Music concerts, *Nagaswaram* playing, dance recitals, *Harikathas* and many other art expressions were part of festivals. Folk art also developed side by side and played a big part in the life of the people. Folk music and folk dances like *Bommalattam*, Dummy horse dances, *Kolattam, Kummi* or *Kaikottikali*, and many other varieties of folk art were seen everywhere.

Encouragement was given also for the development of religious and philosophical thought. Great scholars, musicians and artists of every type gave of their art and scholarship with joy and happiness. Connected with these festivals whether in temples, homes or palaces there was art in everything; in vessels, decorations, clothes, carvings, etc. Animals like elephants, camels, horses and cattle were an important part of the festivals and they were also adorned with lovely jewels and clothes. Here and there we can still see some of this but it is all disappearing as Indian culture and religion are slowly weakening. I think of no better way of bringing boys and girls into contact with our culture than the encouragement of all such beautiful festivals.

I have not yet mentioned the most important of festivals - the *Deepavali* or *Diwali* as it is called in the North. Nothing is more beautiful or joyful than this festival. If festivals are to be revived they should also be understood for otherwise they will become mere show pieces and will lose sincerity. Stories from our epics which form the background, give life and meaning to these festivals. Understanding the inner meaning of such festivals is the only quality that spiritualizes and beautifies. Without it, such occasions will be like the lifeless figures we see in shop windows, dead and deserving to die.

They should bring people together in happiness and beauty and give to sorrowing humanity the radiant light of joy.

- All India Radio on December 5th 1958

Facets of Indian Culture

Lecture No.1

The subject of these lectures is "Facets of Indian Culture". In order to understand and discuss the facets of Indian culture, we have first to have an idea of culture in general, and of Indian culture in particular. India has attained political freedom and has come to a stage when she should be conscious of herself and should express herself in all departments of life according to her distinct individuality. At this moment it is important that we should consider the whole field of Indian culture - what we have inherited from our past, how this culture in all its manifestations and philosophy has subtly permeated our life and thought, how, under our very own eyes, the traditional form of this culture is being eroded - and consider how it will meet the needs of its modern environment and the heavy impact of other civilisations. Without culture, a nation is like a man without a backbone. I say it, not because I am interested in art. I shall endeavour to show that culture is really an essential background for all civilisation.

We say if we have independence we can do "everything else". All over the world today, every country enjoys political freedom and wherever we look, we see them doing "everything else"; "Everything else" meaning things that we do not want. We encourage cruelty and war and nowhere is man happy. All nations want power but do not know how to use that power. Is this the independence we want? Do we want the freedom that tramples upon those who are unhappy, the liberty to be cruel to those who are dependent upon us. If this is so, we shall bring India to a condition of such disgrace that should never be hers because the essence of India is tolerance - India's backbone is the spiritual life which expresses itself in compassion. These are the genuine principles on which our national life should be based.

We want India to respect all things, but above all we want her to respect herself and we want her to be respected by all. We cannot achieve this for our mother-land unless we plunge ourselves into the spirit of our culture, unless we know what our culture is. Though I am giving a lecture on the subject, it is impossible for me to arrive at a final definition of culture, because it is like an invisible thread that goes through all the centuries, through all civilisations, and through all forms of life. It is not merely art or display. Culture does not merely belong to the drawing room, nor to the stage. It does not belong to books alone; it permeates everything and is of all time. It cannot be dissected and compartmentalised though some will attempt to do so. There are some who draw vital differences between different aspects of life's activities. Why should we separate all these expressions into compartments. The moment we so separate them, we are in danger of losing the essence of life. Culture is what we cannot afford to take away from any department of life because it is the flowering of life in civilisation and all its forms of expressions.

History shows us that every civilisation, has at its pinnacle, distinctive culture. All civilisations that were and are considered great have been great in terms of their cultural background, not only in terms of thought, emotion and philosophy, but in those expressions of beauty that we call art. This is the reason why I consider the arts a very important expression of culture - an expression only - for they are not, in themselves, culture exclusively. Culture belongs to all phases of life and the arts only help it in those phases.

In all these expressions India has been supreme. In India, we never had a culture meant to be put up on a wall or merely shown as a performance on the stage. Now you may ask me, why then did you put dancing on the stage? I did this because I believe arts help in the development of all aspects of life. Therefore, through the presentation of beauty, through dance and music which are channels of that beauty and channels of spiritual thought, the minds particularly, the emotions of the people become stimulated.

Right emotion is the essence of evolution. It is a very dangerous thing to be brilliant or clever without knowing how to use imagination, without knowing how

to control the emotions, for, no matter how clever a man is, he still remains, primarily, a creature of emotion. Therefore it is necessary that the emotions become stimulated in the right way.

How can the emotions be directly stimulated? Do we find that our emotions are uplifted by hearing marvellous music, by looking at a magnificent sunset, by the beauty of Nature? Or do we find our emotions being greatly stimulated by a very clever speech full of learning and of quotations from many books? We find inspiration most in that in which the mind is not the predominant factor. If there is too much effort of the mind and very little effort of the emotions, we find ourselves becoming hard as human beings and too intellectual. Untempered intellect tells us to make aeroplanes, warships and bombs, but does not teach us to create music and those masterpieces of art which are divine expressions of the highest emotion.

This is the essence of Indian culture, and this is what is necessary in India today. In Indian political life, there is very little that encourages this age old culture of ours to express itself in terms that will suit our age without distorting itself or losing its image. We do not yet know what we mean by independence. Up to now we have only meant a freedom which other nations have, and this attitude finds its expression in various aspects of our public life. Take for example the women's movement. Though it is right that women should have freedom and equality with men, that women should express themselves fully and have the power so to express themselves, the women of India must also remember that it is not a surface quality that is to be desired. Then what do we mean by equality? Are men our ideals that we want equality with them? We want equality in the sense that we want the noblest in womanhood. Having secured the freedom to speak and to express ourselves, let us not seek equality with men in the term in which it is usually understood. We want *superiority*, superiority in the expression of the true soul of India, superiority in the expression of the essence of our age old culture, superiority to express the spiritual in all the ordinary things of life. This is the superiority we want and it is to this end that women must use their freedom.

I do not feel that most of us, Indians, have a real understanding of our country. We think our country in terms of our people, in terms of our next door neighbours.

Let us not judge our country by the people we meet. We must judge her by the background of the spirit which has animated our people through the ages, and which still serves as a background, however tenuous it may be. As we look at our people, as we view the demoralised scene, we must remember that nobody is really evil, though they may do evil things. They do such things because they do not know better, because they have not had the right influences in life, because in these modern days, man acts as a *mass* rather than as an individual. Because we have not developed the eyes to see and the ears to hear the great and the true. But how can we develop the eyes to see and the ears to hear? Only through one channel - by attuning ourselves to beauty, to greatness. Only if we have attuned our emotions, our minds and thoughts, to the refining influence of greatness can we ourselves become refined in our reactions and be able to, see the difference between the real and the unreal. Only if we know the difference between the real and the unreal, shall we be able to know India, because only then shall we be able to see the constant thread of greatness that runs down through her history, even in these days of her apparent degradation.

Whenever there is the decay of a civilisation we find a degradation of the arts and I am sorry to say that we see this unmistakable symptom in our country today. While, occasionally, still, there is greatness in art I am unhappy there is also much degradation. We may say art does not matter; it is religion, it is spirituality, that matters. Anybody who thinks so is absolutely wrong because art is not something apart from life. Just as religion does not mean merely a temple, a mosque or a church, art is not mere show but the aspiration of the soul to the Highest. It needs the same devotion, the same great flights of imagination that produces religious feeling. Added to these there is the creative spirit which, blossoming out in the artist, produces great works of art. Think of some of the great temples and of the bronze images of South India. These were not made by sophisticated people, but by simple ones, who might not be able to discuss abstract philosophy with us. They may not even be able to speak to us about the abstraction of their own art. Nevertheless, they were people who created masterpieces. Such art helps people to appreciate reality.

Culture is something that is independent of books. It was suggested to me

that I might look into different books to read all about it and find out how different streams of culture have come to different nations and from what sources. The more I looked at books, the less of an idea I had of culture because I find that even eminent and famous writers often write extraordinary things, which have nothing to do with the subject. They give us dates and history. For example, an archaeologist finds a stone age burial spot somewhere near Tirunelveli and upon careful examination proves that the stone age culture has something to do with the Egyptian civilisation. An understanding of culture, built on such facts alone, to me, would be useless. I would much rather express what to me really is culture, as culture is an expression of the soul which cannot merely be judged by the form.

As I have said elsewhere, the majority of our people do not think we should waste our time talking about culture because it has nothing directly to do with politics and with the economic development of the country which, according to them, is the greatest need of our time. I do not agree with such an attitude though I do agree that politics, economics, why, every department of life, is important. But to me the most important thing is to be *civilised* because to be really civilised is the only background which will give us a true attitude to work in any department of life. If we are not truly civilised, we cannot provide real education for our children. Without civilisation, our politics will be degraded into self interest. Of course, we can become adept in using words, but talking is not enough. Talking wisely, beautifully is far more important than talk designed to gain one's point. This beauty of wisdom must come into politics as much as into any other department of life. But it can come only when the politicians become, along with the rest of us, cultured and civilised.

You might ask me whether I am suggesting that our politicians are not civilised! I leave it to you to make your own judgment. I know only that a tree is to be judged by its fruits. Often, people who take it for granted that we are living in a civilised world say 'it is strange that such things should happen in a civilised world'. Is it not strange that such statements should be made? If *such things* do happen in our world, it must be because it is not a civilised world, because in a true civilisation where men and women are truly cultured, *such things* cannot happen.

I feel that we have only reached that stage in civilisation when we can atleast talk about being civilised. The true awakening will come only when tolerance, understanding and compassion begin to rule the world.

I have already said that mere phenomenal knowledge, however advanced that knowledge may be, cannot prevent evil. If evil could be so eliminated, we would have a perfect world today. Look at the modern scientific development and at the astonishing growth of technology. The nations of the west have shown such a tremendous advance in all these. They are so scientific, they make everything scientific, even the killing of people. I am sure if we in India fight, we would not be able to destroy so well and so effectively as they do. It must be noticed that, in the West, they have a capacity for doing things well. This is a capacity to be learnt from them, to be expert and to do things to which we put our hands, well. The present mediocrity which we see in India came to us only a short time ago. If we decide to, we can get rid of it in a equally short time. We have to bring back to our country the greatness of the past, not in the terms of the past, but in the terms of the present which can develop into a great future. But this is something which we alone can do and we cannot take over the expressions of the genius of others without making them our own. We cannot construct our nation in ways which are not natural to it and the banks of the stream of our culture must not be made by alien hands, but must be erected by the flow of our own genius.

Much of our evils have come from our loss of faith. The religious spirit has gone. In the west, the church makes every effort to induce man to become religious minded. But men have gone away from Christianity partly because they feel that this is a faith which has become narrow and that he who grows up in it will also become narrow. It is the same with Hinduism and many other religions. When religion becomes narrow, human beings also become narrow. Let us always remember that, when people go away from religion, they go away from culture and the grace of aspiration departs with it. It may be asked whether an atheist cannot be a cultured man and an artist. I feel that if an atheist has true devotion to an ideal, true devotion to a cause, and if his mind and heart are pure because of that devotion, he is a *religious* man. When I talk of religion, I speak of it in the broadest sense possible.

India must be an example to the whole world. Today we are trying to be a bad copy of the West. I would rather see a Westerner copy from our greatness. We have so much we can give to the modern world, but in order to give great gifts, we must have a true ideal of great refinement, a refinement of the mind, of the soul, a true religious spirit which is the essence of our country. We should never say that a thing is not modern. The very word *modern* is not Indian. It is an English word expressing an un-Indian spirit. Our word is *eternity*, not modernism. In many of the art galleries in the West, long before the world knew Hitler, art knew Hitler, because the spirit of Hitler was expressed in many paintings shown in galleries. We in India do not want to express such a spirit. We have our own genius, our own soul, and that is what we must give. But in order to give that, we must let ourselves be moved by the spirit of our age-old culture and with that background alone can we create forms that are new and give to the world what it needs.

When, today, we talk of cultured people, we often mean only those who speak English. Any English child learns to speak English and yet we cannot necessarily say that such a child is cultured. He is speaking his own language. When we speak our own language, according to the same logic, we are also entitled to be called educated, cultured, civilised, whether we speak English or not. But true education must lead to a true refinement in life. In India, we always want something that comes from elsewhere. I agree, of course, that many of our old customs which were founded on real principles have become narrow in the context of the needs of today and we must give them up. But let us not throw the baby out with the bath water and let us consider carefully what we want to keep.

It is satisfying to see and think that ours is a marvellous country, that it has had a great past and that we have something to give to the whole world. In fact we have presented this kind of image of ourselves to the councils of the world. It is for you and me to ask ourselves whether this is a true image, whether there is anything in our actual daily lives that we can give to the world something to look up to. I do not think that, before we consolidate our own moral position, there will be anything that we can contribute. We have to take the Indian ideal seriously and radically change our own individual lives, not only that aspect of our individual lives that is turned outwards

and is open to the sight of others, but also that part of it which we consider private to ourselves. From this individual point, concentrically, the waves of change have to spread to our homes, to our villages, to our states, to India as a whole. Only if we attempt, in our own individual selves, to express the soul of India and Indian culture, shall we be benefited by the greatness of our Mother and the greatness of the teaching which she has sheltered and embodied.

Our country has been fortunate in that it has known unparallelled greatness. It has been unfortunate in that it has been dominated by external influences and not free yet to express its own genius. It is this at which we must work. What is the use of having mere political freedom when we do not know what to do with that freedom? What profit is it for a man to gain the whole world, so he loses his own soul? Freedom must be in the air in which we live. It is the basis for all creative life and is the birth right of every individual, every civilisation, even of every animal.

When I speak about being an Indian, please do not take it that I mean that we should be closed to other cultures, influences and civilisations. In order to be truly Indian, we must receive whatever is good that comes to us. Through her long history, our country has received many races, many religions, many cultures, and we have made all these our own through the alchemy of understanding, tolerance and wisdom. This is the beauty of India. But instead of allowing these influences to dominate us and to stifle our native genius we must absorb the best that can be assimilated and made into our own and then translate it into Indian art, Indian spirit, Indian aspiration. What we should remember is that it does not really suit us to be anything but Indian. This is only natural.

In saying all this, I would like to emphasise the importance of tradition. We must not think that our present has nothing to do with the past and that we must think only of our future. The past of a nation is like the past of an individual. An individual is what he has become by the experience through which he has passed. A nation, through its history, develops an attitude, a culture, and a way of reacting to problems; a society which is natural and normal to its environment both physical and spiritual. We have come to the present along the road of the past and this road stretches on to the future. As has been stated elsewhere, this tradition will be alive

only as it reacts to the needs of the times. We cannot put the hands of the clock back and return to the Chola or the Gupta periods. This is impossible nor is it desirable. Do not let us bother about the clock nor its hands because all these have to do with time. What we have to do is to hold steadfast to the basic elements of our ideals, of our ways of life, of our thoughts and aspirations, of our values which have nothing to do with time and change. This is the way in which a live tradition marches into the future. Adjustments have to be made according to the circumstances and the times, but that which is eternal does not change and is therefore never to be discarded. So, I say, let us study our past and learn to discriminate between what has been transient and what is permanent and hold to that which is permanent and march on to the future.

In this country, we have had the blessing of great teachers. These great ones have been the epitome of the true soul of our country. We have emphasised the fact that we cannot express ourselves in teaching, in art, in any expression unless we learn to lead the life. We cannot dance the dance of Sri Krishna unless we believe in Sri Krishna, unless, at least for the time being, we become one with Krishna. If we do not believe in Him, what is the use of dressing up and dancing. The outward form should be a visible sign of the inward grace.

There are two great keynotes dominant in India. One, that we should at all times have aspiration to the Highest. Without aspiration, without devotion, we cannot have our culture. Second, though man makes forms, these forms can never be beautiful, except for the response that he gets from the divine. I may dance, but if I do not lift my art in aspiration to the Highest, my dance will be an empty form. I may sing, but if I do not lift my music in devotion to the divine, my song will be of no value. It is this spirit that has, in the past, made India into a great country. It is this spirit, that recognises truth, that recognises great teachers, and in every aspect of life, makes us desire to lift our hearts in aspiration. And, as we lift ourselves in aspiration, there will come a great response that brings beauty of form, such beauty of form as we find in the marvellous sculpture and architecture of our temples, in the paintings of Ajanta and in the beauty of our truly simple homes.

So, to be really Indian in art and culture, we must express divinity in form

and that divinity should never be different from any aspect of life. It should not be possible to make a beautiful image of Sri Krishna and then come out into the street and ill treat a child. I have actually seen a woman going into a temple, presumably to worship, and beating her child even within the sacred precincts. It should not be possible for such things to happen in our country. We must not find satisfaction in the present state of affairs. I am not satisfied, though when I go to the West, I try to point out all that is best in India. Some people think I praise India too much. But I tell them, "remember there are plenty of people in the West who do the opposite". There is always the good and the bad. But among ourselves, we must see what is not good in our country, so that we may eliminate ugliness and bring back again to modern India, real teaching in terms of spirit and form. Any art which does not express fundamental truth will only live for a few years and will then die. It cannot live for centuries. It will not outlive a civilisation.

The world today is dominated by self-interest and cruelty. Before this cruelty becomes obvious and visible in actuality, it becomes obvious in artistic expression. Many ugly forms come into the arts. Sensuality comes into the arts. Ugliness comes into music. Vulgarity appears on the stage and the terror of war is seen in the art galleries. In the arts, war appears long before men fight with each other. In order to counteract all this, we want true artists though there will be only a few who appear to express the power of the Highest. But each one can be an artist in his own way in that he becomes able to appreciate art. It is more important truly to appreciate even than to express, though we want a few to express in order that the many may be able to appreciate. Therefore, everyone is an artist in his own way. Everyone is really inspired by beauty.

Many analyse themselves and say, "why consider the artist to this extent? They are not important. It is much more important to work for the emancipation of the individual, for his upliftment". I consider that in working for culture, I am really working for the true freedom of India, for the uplift and emancipation of every Indian. We want an Indian India, an Indian India two-fold in its manifestation - culturally Indian and spiritually Indian. These two are but one and the same, but with different emphases. Today we are not ourselves, we are trying to be somebody

else. You may ask "why should we not be western? Why not borrow what is good from the West?" I entirely agree that we should borrow what is good, what is useful. But we are not borrowing what is good. We are borrowing what is bad in other countries and do not keep what is good in our own. Therefore, let us create our own genius, let us discover ourselves, let us remember that India must show herself to the world as India.

This can be done only if we can be truly Indian ourselves. If we cannot do this, then I would say that India is not fit for freedom. In the old days, the British used to say that India was not ready for freedom. This was said not because we were not ready politically but because we did not show our fitness for freedom in every phase of life. We were not leading Indian lives. When we went to the west, we led Western lives and because we did not show an independent spirit, the independence of culture, the British began to say "these Indians are not ready for freedom". We must always be in a position where we can respect ourselves. We must be aware of all that is great and spiritual in India. We must show that we are not ashamed to talk about spiritual things as many people are. For example, many young people in modern days are afraid to say that they believe in religion. We should not be ashamed of the great ideas and principles of our own country.

It is this ultimate, fundamental self-respect that we must bring to India. It is only if we make such a contribution that India will have the right balance, otherwise our freedom will be only a freedom that permits misrule and indiscipline. Our liberty must not be merely of the body but equally of the soul, and if we achieve the former without the latter, the result will be what we see in our country today. The body without the soul only decays. It is possible to put a great man into a prison for defending his principles. But even if he is put behind prison bars, he will be free because nobody can fetter his soul and his thoughts are his own. He leads his own life which nobody can interfere with. Nothing can imprison his soul. This is our ancient teaching. We must be able to express that which is within us and that self-expression can come only through the renaissance of culture, culture in everyday life, culture in ordinary action, culture which is part of religion. Another marvellous feature of the ancient past in this country was the simplicity of the faith of the

people in greatness, their faith in spirituality. I have been to many temples in our country and have again and again been inspired by the places in these temples where great poets have dedicated their masterpieces, where great musicians have sung, and great dancers have given their first recitals. All that was most deeply creative in the self was offered first in the temple, because, the temple was the centre of culture, because the temple was the centre of a great civilisation. All this is now forgotten. When a musician sings, he is thinking of his audience. If a dancer dances, he or she is equally conscious of the audience and does not realise that art must have a dedication in the spirit and only if it is spiritual in that way can it express that life which is the essence of India and is the background of Indian civilisation. A part of that spiritual life still remains in India. The sparks of this emotion are still alive though they are not being fanned to a flame.

When we have given our people that spirit, when we know the difference between that which is real and that which is unreal, then shall we have attained independence for our nation. The true independence which is the freedom of the spirit, unfettered by that which has been imposed upon it, will come only when we, each one of us, release ourselves from the bondage of the trivial. Then we can be great citizens of a great country, the splendour and beauty of which will again be an inspiration to the world.

Let others create bombs and warships, we can create master pieces of philosophy, poetry, literature, and of every form of creative expression which can answer the bombs and warships. I do not say that the world of today can create only such destructive things, but, naturally, the idea comes uppermost in my mind because the talk of war is everywhere. War and hatred which is the cause of the war, seek to dominate the world. If the totality of hatred which seeks to destroy this world is to be eliminated, we must learn to hate cruelty in our everyday individual life and bathe in the beauty of the spirit and in the beauty of nature and of art. Remember that we do not have to join educational or humanitarian organisations in order to do this. If every home helps all that is close to that home, then we shall not need organisations for such purposes in the world. Each home will be such an organisation. We make a great mistake in thinking we cannot do anything unless

we join an organisaton. We say we have no time, but we do not need time in order to help. Let us use beautifully, the time we really have. Let us not forget that the most wonderful thing in life is kindness, gentleness, tenderness. Let us not wait to join an organisation to help the individual in every possible way. Let us bend our energies to this and let us not forget that there is such a thing as Karma, the law of ultimate justice. If we are unkind, why should we hope to escape that justice which is the law of God? Under that justice, suffering will teach us a lesson that success will not. We ignorant, human beings begin to understand only when suffering comes to us. If only we could arrive at some other way of understanding, there need be no war or unhappiness.

– Sri.T.S.Avinasalingam Chettiar's 60th Year Commemoration Lectures, Coimbatore 05.03.1968

Facets of Indian Culture

Lecture No.2

One of the most common words in usage is the word *culture*. We hear people and nations being spoken of as *"cultured"* or *uncultured"*. Everybody who uses the word has a vague general sense of what it means. But very few have any correct conception of the idea. It certainly does not imply mere outer education. It is indefinable and subtle. It is more than art. It is impossible for a cultured individual to be insensitive to beauty and if we look at the lives of men and of the activities of nations whether they be political, educational, artistic, religious or philosophical, we see this fine thread of culture that unites the various activities into a harmonious whole.

Yet it is not the mere form that makes culture. It is not the beauty of words alone that makes a poem great, but the inspiration of the poet that expresses itself through the medium of words. This inspiration, even without the poetic form, would be literature if we could be sensitive to what is unheard. Unfortunately, without the form we cannot understand culture. We often think that culture is a way of living, of good manners established according to certain ideas, but it is to be noted that every civilisation has its own pattern of culture. A highly cultured individual belonging to one race may have a pattern of life which is totally different from that of the cultured man belonging to another. Yet, the unity of culture will make each recognise the genuineness of the other. Culture is not etiquette and does not depend upon a certain system of training or habit or ideas.

Dr. Annie Besant, in the beautiful *Kamala Lectures* that she delivered at the Calcutta University, deals with the difference between education and culture in her

very first lecture. She says that education is the drawing out and training of inborn capacities and powers. The function of the teacher is to help the growing human being to express fully all that which is latent in him. She says that the field of education is knowledge. Culture, she says, is the influence on the mind of certain forms of knowledge; but differs from education in that it is not the drawing out and training of the faculties, but is the result of the exercise of the faculties on subjects which arouse sympathetic emotion and imagination. It broadens the mind, eliminating personal, local and racial prejudices, gives an understanding of human nature in its many aspects, and contacts the life-side, rather than the form side of creatures. It is a mistake when people think that they must have a foreign education in order to derive culture. I personally feel that there is a deterioration of culture as a result of copying, and bad copying of any other culture or civilisation. In nature, which is eternally cultured, we find a silent beauty that uplifts humanity. The tree does not seek to become a mountain nor the mountain an ocean. Even among the millions of leaves in a forest of trees, no one leaf is exactly like another. Every single aspect of nature is unique, is separate, is individual and yet each one of these unique parts forms a complete harmony with the whole. It is this individuality which lives in harmony with the whole that we must express in our nation. If we wish to develop that very subtle and magnificent quality of culture we have to stretch ourselves back into the ancient past and on to the distant future. We have to contact the spirit that was in the past and will be in the future. One important way in which we see Indian culture expressing itself is reverence to life, the power to see divinity in all things and to see in every form of creation the divine artist at work. Nothing ugly, vulgar or cruel can be an expression of culture. Cruelty in any form is the sign of the savage, the uncultured man. The spirit of refinement is the hallmark of culture.

With all the technological advances and the discoveries that make life easy and luxurious, we often mistake wealth for culture. With such advancements we have come to realise that the world is one, but there is no unity on account of such a realisation. In the old days space and time were really difficult to surmount but the area of culture was more unified that it is now. A man from the north and a man from the south spoke the same language though their tongues were different. If we

would only examine this culture of the north and the south in the past, we are immediately struck by the similarity of the spirit. Hindustani music and Carnatic music are a case in point. The styles are so different and yet the spirit is the same.

By the wonderful influence and the permeation of culture, ugliness becomes transmuted into beauty. It removes the savage from savagery and takes him to the heights of sensitive living. Because of its subtlety, though it is obvious to those with the eyes to see, its significance is yet very little known. It is to be seen in the growth of the people, in the growth of nations, in the growth of character. Culture pervading civilisation as it does, cannot be divorced from character. We can almost say that culture is character and cannot be separated from it. Wherever a nation is cultured, there the philosophies, the languages have flourished, there the literature has been great. Great men and women are born into such civilisations because such civilisations are developed and are ready to receive great people. I wish to stress the importance of the environment for the birth of greatness. The leaders of a race, become mouth pieces of their civilisation and it is a necessary that we should create an atmosphere, an environment, a background, which will help the birth of greatness and nourish it when it is born.

We, therefore, see that this attribute that we call culture is the result of environment and the reaction of the environment on the individual of the race. It is not, in reality, an absolute thing because the ideas of nations and people change from time to time. These reactions, are all changeable according to the advancement of civilisation. According to the advancement of the minds of the people, their ideas of culture also change, but without any change to the fundamental concept of culture itself. It is the expression of beauty in character and mind. It is something that is an unconscious expression, expressing itself unconsciously, naturally, in every aspect of life.

Since India attained freedom, there has been a great awakening in regard to the glory of our culture which the whole world admires. Unfortunately, our education has remained as dry and un-Indian as ever, and in some respects, is even more westernised than before. We have to realise that the cultural character of the country cannot be promoted without vision, without understanding the roots. It must

permeate the home, the family, the life of the people as a whole, and the educational programme. If we really believe in our culture and its values, both in national and individual lives, we have to make every effort to understand not only the exterior form of the culture, but the spirit which gave birth to the form.

We are now promoting the arts along many lines. Unfortunately, while there is great enthusiasm for this promotion, it is not done with a knowledge of the spirit that gave birth to the forms of our art and so there has been, shall I say, an unnecessary excitement in showmanship, and a great deal of expenditure on show rather than that which is really culture. We have to understand that it is not mere entertainment that we should aim at and there should be the realisation that in order to build up our true culture, we do not have to spend more money, but rather we should take care of the higher side of the cultural life. Entertainment itself, whether it be through dance or music or any other art, depends for its value not on the mere ability to perform, but more on the ability to understand. So, knowledge, understanding, and an attitude to life-all these things are as important to real entertainment as talent alone. There should be greater emphasis, particularly in educational work, for this kind of development of the individual. We are spending a great deal on education, but culture seems to have nothing to do with education in our country. How can education and culture be divided because in order to be effective, education has to be permeated with culture. We wish to create something new, not because we are inspired to do so, but for the sake of creating something new. I am not against anything new because it is new. If something new is beautiful, spontaneous and natural, I am prepared to accept it, but unfortunately we are unable to achieve this because we do not have the necessary attitude. Culture must be the background from which art is born as the natural expression of the individual. It cannot be a forced expression. It is because we are making it forced that we find a great decadence in taste. This is the worst thing that has happened to our country. It has affected our lives in every way. Culture is a complete thing. It should not be designed to be just an entertainment to occupy man's leisure hours. Only this realisation will help and this realisation must take an important part in education.

We must remember that, ultimately, there is no such thing as an Indian culture

opposed to European culture or any other culture. Real culture is the quality that is the unifying force which brings nations, religions and all differences together. In fact, the most precious gift that any nation can give to the unity of man is this refinement of understanding and, when we speak of spiritual development, automatically we consider the two as going together. I do not think that real spiritual development in its true sense is possible for anybody to understand in its final essence unless there is a full comprehension of culture. Sensitivity, develops an ability to respond to all that is beautiful and great. Out of that sensitivity arises refinement. This is why the influence of culture is very great, and we see how through the centuries people have been great when the culture has been great. Historians might be able to make categorical statements regarding events and facts, but few care to find out how the development of art, and the way of thinking which produced that art, affected the life of the people. The history of art and of culture is really the history of character. The development of the individual is dependent on this fundamental truth.

We need to understand who is a savage, because, I think we have an unfortunate conception that the world, in general, is civilised. I have the opposite idea and am of the opinion that the world is not civilised. I feel this because, as long as there is cruelty, as long as there is fear of war, as long as there is prejudice among nations, religion against religion, colour against colour, there is no true civilisation. All these are the ingredients of war for, war is but an outcome of these feelings when they burst into expression. If none of these feelings exist, war will have no chance to erupt at all. The direct approach to peace is not through a peace treaty. The direct approach to peace is to discover a way by which our attitude to life can be changed. This is really the only true solution to the problem. If our attitude changes, if our approach to world conditions are open, outward differences will not matter. If these differences exist, we cannot help them. I have a brown skin, the European has a white skin. Differences exist and they make the world beautiful in variety. But the feeling of differences, of superiority and inferiority;, emphasis on personality, these are what we have to conquer. If we conquer them, we would have really achieved what culture would achieve in human nature. We should have achieved that quality which sees unity in diversity. Therefore, we see

that real culture is not just art, it is not mental enlightenment, it is not learning. It is the essense of the soul, the essence of the highest in us.

Recently, there have been great developments in science. There is a glamour about science because it has produced Sputniks and Satellites of every kind. I feel that while other people may give Sputniks as a gift to the world, our country can give the idea of universal life, the ideal of spirituality, of simple living as gifts to man. Of course, every country has its own contribution to give to the world of culture. Fundamentally, the concept embodies unity. Art is one, beauty is one, character is one, but all these have different expressions according to environment and it is very sad to see people all over the world becoming like one another. This is one of the distressing things that one notices in the eastern countries specially. When I went to Japan I saw something of the old, perfect Japan. I saw the temples, the monasteries, images of Buddha. I thought *this is the gift of India! This is the gift that India gave in the past to others!* The teaching of Buddha for example, the great ideals of life, the beauty of art underlying the spiritual qualities. This was the victory that India achieved once. It was a cultural victory, victory without a war. Not an economic victory, not a victory of colour, but the victory of the spiritual, of the essential Indian quality that had influenced the far-east, particularly through the teachings of the Lord Buddha. It also influenced South-east Asia, firstly through Hinduism and then through Buddhism. When I saw all this, I began to see how much of a great world power India had been at that time. Why was India a world power? Because Sri Krishna had lived in this country, because Sri Rama had lived here and so had the Lord Buddha. It was their Teaching that made India a great world power. In Japan one goes to Kyoto, the ancient capital and one sees the monasteries and the temples and then one goes to Tokyo, the modern capital where there are many night clubs. I am told there are more night clubs in Tokyo than anywhere else. We see the contrast not only between east and west, but the change that is taking place in our sense of values.

What does change really mean? When we say a change has taken place in a civilisation, it means only one thing; that there is a change in values. It all depends upon the emphasis we give to culture, to spiritual ideas, to science. Science is not

necessarily materialistic though it can be so. There are two reasons why India is not a great power today. First, because of the pressure of the material culture of the world. The mind of man generally is turned towards another way of life. There is no longer the acceptance of the supremacy of spiritual values. Wealth, and technology which produces wealth; these things weigh more. Secondly, India has for a long time forgotten her own self. There has been a gradual forgetfulness of our background and our great teachings which are our heritage. Unless we discover what each country is rich in I believe real internationalism cannot come. Internationalism cannot be achieved by watering down everything that is special and characteristic of each nation to a dull common mean.

Sometimes it is asked how can there be internationalism when we lay emphasis on the national culture of any one country. It is my opinion, if we are true to ourselves, we are contributing more towards internationalism than in any other way. If we are nothing, if we are neither east nor the west, we are not international, we do not belong to the world at all. I do not know where one would belong in that case. Only the genius or the greatness of a people can meet the greatness or genius of another people on terms of mutual accord and understanding. Two smallnesses cannot meet. Smallness makes for difference, greatness for unity. Therefore, when there is an emergence of greatness then there also emerges a power to understand greatness elsewhere and through this understanding comes real internationalism. Real internationalism does not lie in the ignorance of everything pertaining to one's own country. Some people say "I believe in the universal religion", but when I ask them whether they know anything about Hinduism, they answer in the negative. They know nothing about Christianity nor about Buddhism or about any other religion either. In other words, universality is, according to them, knowing nothing of anything. It is like *universal love*. A man can love the world but he cannot love his next door neighbour. The difficulty comes because the next door neighbour is too near and the world in general is too far away to be troublesome!. So I can love it far more easily. Therefore, I do not believe in universal love any more. I am sure you will understand what I mean. Universal love will automatically become a natural expression if we can manage to feel interest in and affection for the individual.

As I have explained, the same principle holds in the case of nations. Real internationalism is truly the emergence of the best in each. Therefore, I believe that if man is to be brought to the consciousness of the one world, then the highest qualities of each country and the highest expressions of their culture must emerge and flourish. If this is so, it is vital to discover the highest quality as much as is possible. When we think of one world we usually think of the one world of human beings. But in India, and when I say India I mean the India of the sages and saints who gave the country its keynote, there arose the ideal of one life, and of the divinity that lives in all creatures; not merely in humanity. Emphasis was laid on the reverence that we must have for all life. One might almost say that reverence is the keynote of the country, reverence, not only for greatness embodied in an individual, but to all life in all creatures, in every person. A cultured individual was considered to be person who has fully experienced this and that is why *Ahimsa* became such an important concept in the cultural and philosophical make up of India. But this word *Ahimsa* has suffered from a political interpretation. It has become a political word just like *Pancha Sheel* has become. *Pancha Sheel* was a term used by the Lord Buddha to mean the five great cardinal imperatives according to which the individual and the collective life are to be lived. But, now, these terms are used not only by India, but by Russia, or sometimes by China, to mean a political expedient. The word *Ahimsa* has shared a similar fate, but it has a deeper meaning. It was used beautifully at the time of the Mahabharata war when Bhishma was on his death bed and was answering questions which the Pandavas were asking him at the instance of Sri Krishna. Bhishma speaks of the highest *dharma* as being *ahimsa*, harmlessness which is not a negative attitude. When I speak to Western audiences about animal welfare they immediately ask me questions about cows in India. There seems to be a major misconception in the West about India - India's attitude towards cows. They think that our so called cow worship is foolish and that useless cows merely waste our national produce. Their solution of the cow problem is to kill the cows off and eat them!. I always say that the cow in India is the symbol of all living creatures. Our attitude to the cow is the outcome of a spirit of gratitude. We automatically

feel a sense of gratitude to a creature, which though an animal, has protected us, helped us, and given us life. This relationship, which we often find among villagers, is a beautiful thing.

This sensitivity to life, this sense of reverence, should be the essence of education. Education is not merely the ability to read and write. That is literacy and not education. Real education is sensitivity and insight. It is a process that is guided by the inborn capacity of the individual, guided by culture which should be the environment into which he is born. To aid the development of culture, there are many forces in the world. Among these are science, art and religion. Let us first examine religion. Basically every religion teaches the same thing-how to live. Every great teacher of humanity has been so great and inspiring that out of the inspiration of his life a religion has been born. Whenever we speak of the founder of a religion, we speak under a misapprehension. None of these great *founders* thought they were establishing a religion. Nor did they write books. Other people wrote about what they taught. They merely lived and taught both by their life and by their words. As a result of their lives and teaching, inspiration has flowed, great thoughts and great ideals have been placed before their followers. We are thrilled by these ideals and we think, therefore, that the particular presentation in which we have been brought up is the best in the world and nobody else's is as good. In that way Hinduism has a great contribution to make. Hinduism is not a religion in the ordinary sense of the word. It is a *dharma*, it is a way of life and the approach of this attitude was so tolerant that it was possible for every religion to find a home in India. I remember an American writer saying to me some years ago, "What can we do with the Hindus? When a Christian speaks about the Christ to them their reaction is one of great reverence to the Christ, but instead of becoming Christians, they merely add another image in their shrine rooms - the image of the Christ!". In other words, Hinduism accepts all presentations of truth. Actually, the differences among religions is superficial. For example, Islam says we cannot put God into a form and therefore we cannot worship an image. So in their mosques and, indeed in their arts, images and the portrayal of God or human beings is prohibited. Islam is right in saying that God cannot be contained in a form. The Hindu says the human mind is too limited to imagine that which is beyond form. Therefore, as

God is everywhere, even in images, let us have an image on which we can concentrate our minds. Every form is divine and so let us have many forms and worship. Now who is right? Both are right. It only needs understanding to see that there is no difference at all. Actually this is what we call understanding human nature. Human nature does limit and that is why after the passing of the Lord Buddha, who said, "Do not have statues of me, only understand my teaching" many wonderful images of him were produced and many pictures were painted. I do not see how we can do without form; of course, if we can, that would be wonderful thing.

There is beauty in the expression of every form and in all manifested life. Though we may say the physical body is unimportant because it is completely transitory, during its transient existence, it is a divine thing. It is a divine expression. Let us then make all our physical expressions beautiful. Then, automatically, the non-physical part in us will be deeply affected. This is where art plays its part. The great force of art, is really an understanding of the beauty of manifested life. It is the creative expression of the divine being. What the creator has done with this universe, each of us smaller creators, the creative spirit in each individual, can do though on a vastly smaller scale and this is really a reflection of the cosmic creative force which is the force of life itself. We should understand the meaning of art, its worth, its effect on human beings, on character. Everybody enjoys beauty. There is no one who does not. Even the individual who says he is not an artist and does not understand art enjoys beauty. I once met a lady who said, she did not appreciate art or care for art. I asked her whether she did not like to have beautiful cooking vessels. She said that she certainly did. I asked her why she wanted to have beauty in her cooking vessels and she could only say that she liked their shape, and that it gave some zest to her cooking. It was clear because she had in some way this love of beauty which is an appreciation of art and this was a symbol of that sensitivity even though it was in an elementary form. This love for beauty, which is the experience within, of the individual trying to be his real self, is the natural characteristic of all men. It is the love for the divinity within each, it is the force of evolution, it is the energy of growth. By loving beauty, by creating beauty, we grow, and that is why there is a great place in life for appreciation of beauty. Art is really a form of *yoga*.

Sometimes in the West, they think *yoga* is some kind of physical dexterity. They say, "I can perform *Yoga,* I can stand on my head". Well, a circus performer can do more than standing on his head, but every circus performer is not a *yogi*!. What such people achieve is an aspect of the control of the body. That is all. One part of *yoga* has to do with the control of the body. The world in general has not understood the place of this control in the scheme of *yoga*. Real *yoga* is the ability to flower into a great union with life. This is why it is said that art is one of the forms of *yoga*. Discipline, intelligence, high and deep emotion and combination of these will finally call up in us what we call the creative force, the creative ability, which is a wonderful power because each person responds to the beauty that this power creates. Unfortunately, even this power, like the power of religion, is misused because so many things go in the name of beauty.

There is one speciality about this expression of beauty. There is no such commandment as *should* in art. We either like something or we do not like it and this is the final judgement. But people do not, usually, have the courage of their conviction, and, because of mass compulsion and the desire to be like everybody else, we get into the habit of saying that we like something since this is the opinion of most people. What I call ugliness is immoral and evil. If beauty can change the hearts of people, so can ugliness and, I feel in a very subtle way, sub-consciously, we are influenced both by beauty and by ugliness and that is why it is so important to use the natural tendency of people to love beauty, and to give them what they need through that natural impulse. We are not doing this. There is a great new life that is beginning to emerge and all over the world there is dawning the realisation that art has a place in life. Nations are proud of their art and they are beginning to think that the best way to understand other people will be through this medium. Art now occupies a central part in world life. Artists are travelling more than ever before. I think more Indian artists will be going to the West, but, whether the art they take with them will be good or not, is another question. To India, visiting artists bring all kinds of art, the value of which to our country is very questionable. Our country is being very much influenced by this type of art.

Because there is no true discrimination in the mind of man, real, discrimination

in art is yet to come. The real understanding of the place of art, and its effect on human nature, and its final summing up into culture, its final summing up into refinement which alone expresses the soul of a nation- that has yet to come. That real understanding is the true intelligence of a race. Spirituality is not merely closing our eyes and sitting in a solitary place. To be spiritual, is not to be away from the world. It is to learn to live truly in the midst of the world. This has been understood by the Hindus and that is why they produced the great concept of Nataraja, the great *yogi*, the cosmic dancer, the aritist. In that very image of Nataraja, we have a marvellous symbol. In the image is the entire universe, the destruction of evil, the destruction of ignorance which is the ultimate evil. In the image is the compassion and understanding even of that ignorance and evil, the tenderness which He incarnates, the happiness that emerges as a result of the control of the five senses is born the sixth sense, intuition and wisdom. We all think we have only five senses, but we really have a sixth, though the sixth is rarely awake. This again is symbolised by the third eye of Lord Siva and so we find in the image of Nataraja a complete conception of the fulfillment of man.

Science in the East has concerned itself not only with external phenomena, but with the internal life. It was a science of the self, the science of the understanding of human nature. If modern empirical science can come together with the science of the self, how wonderful such a union would be! But great scientists of every country achieve this realisation to some extent, because, when they are very great, they begin to receive an inner feeling of the grandeur of nature and because they see it they develop within themselves a kind of reverence. This is why we find many great scientists being spiritual minded. Just as art is a means of becoming one with nature and, without nature man cannot create beauty, so real science, the highest science, is also becoming one with nature. One understands nature through the feelings that identify you with it. Finally the end is the same. But all this does not occur except in the greatest of artists and the greatest of scientists.

How can we ultimately spiritualise the world? Why is there is so much suffering among human beings? Human beings alone are the cause of their misery. The greatest danger to humanity is man. The nation, the race, ultimately mean

only the individual. We have to come, for the answer to all questions, back to the individual. Whether it is in art or science or in the absorbing problem of world peace, we find the individual to be the key and only when he can change, will the nations change. This has been the message of every great teacher. Sri Krishna said "find yourself. Be your real self". The Lord Buddha said the same. They never thought about world problems at all because they knew that the only world problem was the individual. We, each one of us, is the world problem. Therefore, from ages past, the great teachers have struck the same note. The sum total of all knowledge and experience comes to a single factor, to the ideal of the oneness of life, of sympathy, of understanding. Unless we, individually, come to this summation, we cannot make the world happy nor can we make ourselves happy.

Now that India is free and can control her own destiny, we should be able to take full advantage of the discovery of Indian art and culture, which we ourselves have made and also utilise this great urge for the revival of Indian art. Several circumstances are favourable to us. We have embassies in every country. More Indians than ever go abroad and, what is still more significant, a new type of Westerner has begun to come to India. In the days of the British rule, though the British were to be seen everywhere in India, we never heard of any important visitor or official ever going to see a dance recital or to a concert of Indian music. The new type that comes to India, on the other hand, is deeply interested in Indian art, Indian culture, philosophy and religion. This therefore is the period of our trial, because just when the world has the opportunity to contact India in the real sense of the word through truly interested foreign visitors, unhappily Indians themselves are becoming denationalised at a very fast rate. With the freedom that India has gained, the psychological atmosphere has become agitated and uncertain. The world asks for Indian culture. Alas! Indians themselves do not know that culture. They long to interpret what they do not know to the West. The result of this effort is that the interpretation has tended to become un-Indian. So, when a dance is presented, often it is Indian in form, but has a Western soul. Though we retain the purity of our classical music, the music that one hears everywhere is influenced by some kind of mongrel melody that the cinema has been producing while, in painting, that Indian feeling which should ensoul it is not there. Generally speaking, I would

say that there is not even a belief in the great background that we have inherited. To me, Indian culture is not only that which is presented in the form of art or poetry, but is a synthesis of a whole civilisation. Just as when sunlight is broken, it becomes a rainbow, with varying colours, so is culture made up of diverse rays of life's expression. We cannot truly represent culture by merely trying to present some kind of art. We can do it successfully only when we become that culture.

We are always looking for happiness, but we are wasting a great deal of time when we look for it everywhere except within ourselves. This capacity to look within is something that we have to keep in the forefront in the educational plan. Unfortunately, it is the movements that seek to destroy and not to unite that concentrate on the youth. Those who work for constructive unity do not fully realise or take advantage of the force of youth. Destructive forces seem to understand better that youth power is an inexhaustable source of energy and use it. But constructive movements often do not understand the potential of this power and therefore do not utilise it for building - building character, building nations.

There is no doubt that real universal understanding, universality and internationalism exists naturally only among children. They are born international, they are born with the international feeling, they all have a natural sense of beauty. As they grow up, due to wrong education, these qualities die in them. The one thing we have to do in education is to see that children are not educated out of their true selves. Unfortunately, we like to train them with the ideal of making them grow up like us. In India, for untold years, the great saints have dwelt on the ideals I have been talking about. India needs to express them once again. India can help humanity if we can give this keynote to the world. The world can help India - the India I am talking about, to regain the understanding which it has lost.

- Lecture at Sri Avinasalingam Home Science College, Coimbatore on 6th March 1968

Facets of Indian Culture

Lecture No.3

It is essential that we should, at this point, consider how to consolidate the position of our motherland in the vast contemporary world scene. In this connection there are several points that have to be examined and accepted or rejected. We have to decide whether there is anything in India or in Indian culture and civilisation which does not pertain to time but has an eternal message? If there are such elements, are they expressed at all in the life that we today present to the rest of the world? Are there, coming from the past, elements which have no meaning to the present and are, therefore, harmful for development? Can we rid ourselves of such elements without damaging the basic structure of our civilisation? How are we going to reorganise our society on the basis of these eternal concepts which are ancient as well as modern? It is my firm opinion that if our society is to be stable and if we are able to convey to the world something for which the world is waiting and something which is of value to the humanity, we shall have to reconstruct society on the basis of these profound values on which our forefathers placed such emphasis.

It is because of these concepts that our art and culture have had special significance and it is because of these that we can give a great contribution to the world. It seems as if the West itself is moving towards a deeper culture gradually. The East, especially India, discovered this depth through intuition and with the feeling and experience of realisation. Our position, from this point of view, is different from what obtains in other parts of the world. Whether it is in the north of India or in the deep south, we trace our authority to the works of great *rishis*, great *jnanis*. In a sense, we may say that various branches of culture and knowledge

had, each, its own *gotra* because each can be traced back to a great intuitive individual for whom we use the word *rishi*. To take a well known example, Bharata Natya can be traced back to the great *rishi* Bharata and before him we can trace it to the splendour of Nataraja himself.

In all Indian art there is a purely inner vision and knowledge. At present, in India, we have reached a stage of unreality when greatness is passed over because of irrelevant consideration. As I have said in the previous lecture, we are supposed to be in *Kaliyuga* and this is a symbol of that particular age. The origin of music in the West is in the consciousness of the composer, but in India we trace that origin to the *Vedas* themselves and the *Vedas* have been defined as the breath of the Creator Himself. In all this, we are able to give to art a cosmic conception. However, the vast majority of Indians have yet to penetrate into that cosmic consciousness which was so well realised in the past by those who, understood. We are now suffering from an artistic and cultural *pralaya* because of the prevalence of the superificiality of ignorance with regard to the real spirit of art. It is for us to realise fully what a great force it is and to discover how it is to be evoked in today's world. It is a good thing that there are still some who have the consciousness of this and those who have it can and should inspire others who feel that art is spiritual. But the main thing is to bring this idea down in terms of physical reality and this is where the difficulty comes in. We accept that Siva is the cosmic dancer. Our minds have travelled far because we remember the descriptions of the great Cosmic Dancer. Even if a dancer on the stage is not as good as he or she should be, an old fashioned Indian would tend to appreciate the dance because he will think of the cosmic idea behind, transcending the physical form. If we really examine this point, we shall realise how humble should be the artist who tries to portray such a great idea. The dancer must have a tremendous feeling even though it be only a little fringe of that great consciousness and with that feeling should come the humility that all truth engenders. If we have really understood, we are bound to feel humble. In such portrayals also we are different from other races and from other traditions. For example, in Christian countries it would be incorrect to act the part of Jesus on stage. The name Jesus is rarely given to anyone. It would be a sacrilege. In the same way, the great prophet Mahommed cannot be made a

subject of presentation on the stage. These ideas can be understood by us. Yet in the Indian tradition, we have a totally different concept. What can we dance except as a part of and in homage to the great Cosmic Dancer? What subjects should we have for our art except stories of the great incarnations. What names can we give our children except the great names which remind us each time they are uttered of the holiness which is an inseparable part of life? Today, we are not so much concerned with the idea that we are trying to express as much as with the mode of expression. How can we have a mode unless it is the vehicle of the idea? All forms are moulded by the spirit for the purpose of expression. We often see people who have no feeling for religion wanting to portray Nataraja, wanting to represent Sri Krishna in the dance. How can this be possible?

If art is to be established on the basis of reality, it must have inspiration, it must have sincerity, it must have *bhava* to use an old Indian aesthetic concept. What is *bhava*? It is the expression of our feeling. What we feel, we express. How can anything be expressed externally if there is nothing inside to express? Then there is no *bhava* and the whole representation becomes mere mimicry. I feel unhappy that this is what is happening in modern India and is what we consider to be a revival of our art. This is because, fundamentally, the spirit of true art and the spirit of the times in which we live are opposed to each other. We have to feel Nataraja and only when we feel Him can we express the *bhava* that will represent Him. Many think that *bhava* is what we want other people to think we are expressing. In a music concert, for example the singer who knows that a particular top note is going to please the public and that the public expects it, plays a kind of rehearsed game between himself and the audience. The top note is completely all right if it comes as a natural part of a *sanchara* or a *sangati*. But it sticks out like a sore thumb when it comes in as I have described. When art is true, then the audience must become a part of the singer's consciousness. Only when there is this true accord and unity between the audience and the singer that the singer will sing for himself alone and by doing so he will be singing for the audience also. We respond to our own inspiration and the true creative artist does not create for appreciation. Unfortunately, often it is the public that gives the lead to the artist instead of the artist giving the lead to the public. If we are to work for the promotion

of true art in India, we have to get back to the basic idea, we have to work from the source and not from the end.

A cultural revival can only be possible hand in hand with a spiritual revival because Indian art is not possible of being expressed in any other way. Modern people may say this is a deficiency. But this so called deficiency has been accepted and upheld India over hundreds of years and it made India great. Therefore, it is ridiculous to say that it is a deficiency. This is our uniqueness, our way of life, our goal and the completed expression of our civilisation. For centuries we have held this ideal, and there has been no department of life which was not animated by this attitude. If the *rishis* gave us our art, let us not blame them if our attempts to modernise it makes it trivial. Let us not expect the *rishis* to think in terms of the modern as opposed to the past. Their attitude, their concept, was for all time and if we want to survive with the uniqueness that made us great in the past, then the great tradition must continue. We are not ourselves any more. We are not giving our particular message. Many people sing Tyagaraja's songs, but they do not try to contact the inspiration that made him compose his songs. Tyagaraja sang because his music was his conversation with Sri Rama. He was overflowing with devotion and he did not think about people or publicity. If he had desired for wealth, for a place in society, he could have gone to the Maharajas who were only too ready to welcome him, but he did not want that kind of pleasure or riches. He has actually sung a wonderful song about this. It is not possible for all musicians to live as Tyagaraja did. That is reserved for the very few. The others have to live in this world and accept all the responsibilities of such living, but there is no doubt that Tyagaraja's songs can be sung with *bhava*, only if we can contact the same inspiration and only if that ideal is in our hearts. If we say we are Indians, then, in free India, we should want Indians who are free in their soul as in every other way. Freedom is not only the freedom of our exterior self.

It is impossible to think of our country separated from this sense of beauty. While our life was religion dominated and our religion demanded simplicity, the life was still invested with beauty. The great *Avataras* are described as having been the embodiments of beauty. There is no doubt that art belongs to the soul, to

the intuition, to the *buddhi*. Therefore any other concept of art would be illogical. Today we apply the superficial intellect of appreciation and criticism to art. Today, the people who pass as critics of arts are mainly those who have no vision or intuition. This is unfortunate. A lawyer will not allow a person unversed in the law to give an opinion on legal problem. The same holds good with a doctor in his particular field. But anybody becomes an art critic though such a person may have no experience and no learning in art.

Today people are working in India for harmony, but only disorder results. What else can we expect? If we are full of inner disorder how can we achieve the outer harmony? Therefore, why should we not give our people that kind of life which is the representation of harmony. Give them beauty. This is necessary because that beauty will create the environment that will promote internal harmony which will be expressed outwards also. That harmony will once more become the focal point of spiritual thought. This I believe is India's mission.

Many people say that if we work for national reconstruction, we are thinking in narrow terms, we are thinking only of India and neglect other countries and their civilisations. I have never understood this argument because I cannot separate the truly national and the international. How is it possible to say that national work, the effort to give the contribution of our country to all humanity is not international? I do believe that wherever we are, whichever country we may belong to, we must know our immediate environment and the life and people among whom we have been born. We must work for the welfare of these people with all our heart and this alone will give us an understanding of mankind in general. Therefore, I believe that, for India, there is no greater cause to which her children can dedicate themselves than to work for her regeneration along manifold lines of activity. If we do this in the right spirit and in the right way, happiness will come ultimately not only to our country, but to the whole world as well. There are many ways of being active and there are many fields of activities all of which are equally patriotic. Many people think that the culture of our country is a thing of the past and that we have to fall in line with other, so-called, more advanced nations and accept their cultural gifts. But our own history has to continue and we have to make our own future. Indians

feel unhappy when other countries criticise us. We desire the west to say how much they respect us and to exclaim how great India is. But when our young men and women go to foreign universities, do they try to show the greatness of our civilisation and culture? On the other hand we demonstrate immediately that, in our estimation, the civilisation of those countries is higher because we immediately adopt their ways of life, their clothes, their habits and even their very jargon.

By saying this I am not trying to prove that our nation is superior to other nations, because to me, true internationalism consists in the coming together of the highest genius of mankind everywhere. Only when the true and high genius of every nation is fully expressed can there be real brotherhood. When each country expresses that genius which is its own, when it gives of the unique beauty which is its contribution, when the true genius that is in each race comes forth, then there is true brotherhood. Genius cannot but recognise genius elsewhere. A great artist cannot but recognise beauty in another nation or race. Great poets cannot help but recognise true poetry written in another land. For example, when Tagore wrote his beautiful poems in Bengali and when these poems became translated into English, the whole of the western world was taken by storm. In spite of the fact that they could understand the poetry only in the translated English, they said, "here is true Indian poetry which proclaims itself by its own beauty and profoundity". They were greatly moved by the Indianness of Tagore's poetry. They felt his poems as a new and fresh message which came from another land and they were grateful to India. I instance Tagore because he belongs to our own time. In the past, this message of Indian art and culture spread across the seas into other nations of south-east Asia where they were gratefully received and so transformed in the course of time into new expressions where we could trace the Indian origin, but they had become something in their own right, something not Indian any more, but equally beautiful. We speak of the high civilisation of modern times, but today humanity is in the process of destroying itself. If there can be the possibility of such colossal destruction then I must say emphatically that we are experiencing only the negation of civilisation, the destructive barrenness that comes from an absence of culture. It is at this period that the world needs the contribution that India can give. But in order

to give this contribution, we have to go to the roots, we have to build, we have to reconstruct ourselves.

It is often seen that the whole spirit of a people at a time becomes expressed in one or a group of national leaders, who are, so to speak, the embodiments of the dominant idea of their people. Equally we cannot escape the conclusion that if a nation follows such a person, he or they are followed because they express the sentiments of the people. We know there has been more than one terrible war and destruction on an unbelievable scale due to such leadership. How are we going to prevent another war?. How are we going to promote true understanding and true brotherhood? We shall be able to do it only if we repudiate the total ugliness that there is in destruction, in killing, in the lack of reverence for life. Just as the lotus grows out of mire, so can a great new civilisation come out of the suffering through which humanity has passed.

The beauty of India is unconscious. It is a dynamic expression of inspiration. Another great feature that we notice in our creative spirit, is a great impersonality attached to all of them. We do not know who the great architect of the Minakshi temple was. We do not know who produced the concept of Nataraja and moulded the many beautiful images of Nataraja that we see in India. We do not know who painted the Ajanta frescoes. We do not know who Kalidasa was, who Bharavi was, who Magha and Bhavabhuti were? Even when the great poets gave themselves the names by which we call them today, the only thing we can be sure of is that these names were not their true names. The artists forgot themselves in their art because they were so thrilled by inspiration and did not want even their true names to be known by posterity.

India is divided into two sections. One group thinks that we have only a past and that anything which belongs to modern life is suspect. These are our orthodox people and while they have a good knowledge of the past of India, they do not look forward to the future. The second group consists of the modern generations who do not see any value in the past. To them, the past is a dead weight that holds them back. This clear divorce between the two types makes for a confused understanding of the future. One group does not believe in the future,

the other does not believe in the past. The truth is that there cannot be a future without the past and the past must stretch into the future. We must take the middle path. I have my own orthodoxy which has nothing to do with customs and outworn prejudices. My orthodoxy makes me wish to keep that which is beautiful and to look for more to add to that beauty, but always to remain true to the spirit of the spiritual life which is the reality of India's past. Once we taste of that spirit, we can never go away from it. People often think that I merely want the old things to be copied. No, I only want to keep the age old spirit and the new things will fall beautifully into place. If people in those days were able to create new things of beauty, why cannot we do so now?. Not only can we not create, but we have come to a stage when we cannot even copy. If I go to a sari shop and ask for a beautiful old pattern, they say they are sorry that they do not have such things in stock because there is no demand for them. It is in this way that the old arts and crafts disappear. In the old days, because we were still part of a great culture, we had discrimination. Naturally and unconsciously we selected the beautiful and discarded what was second rate. Therefore, true craftmanship thrived because nobody would look at things which were not of the best quality. It is this discrimination that we have lost along with our culture. How can that same creative spirit come back today?. The only way that spirit can come back is by concentrating heart and mind on discovering that attitude towards life which animated our people for so many centuries. Today, we live in a divisive state of mind. We are all flying away from the centre and there is no co-operative effort for working our way back to the centre. It is only from the centre that we can truly move out to the circumference without losing ourselves.

Why should there not be many religions and many languages in this country? This is part of our uniqueness. The religions came not by the right of conquest, but through invitation, through the great spirit of tolerance of our kings and because we were always willing to give asylum to the persecuted. Imagine how rich this composite culture of India can be with so many streams running into the sea of culture, making it rich with an infinite potential. In the old days, we did not think in terms of the north and the south. The spirit of the Alwars was taken up in the south, north, east and west and was sung by Ramananda, Chaitanya, Shankaradeva

and many others in other part of India. The great icons, the great images in all parts of India showed the unity of spirit and yet in those days there were no aeroplanes, no railways, no motor cars. Man walked from one end of the country to the other and a vast, unified India grew which had no cultural quarrel with any other part. How did that happen? Everything can happen when the human mind and hearts are strong and when a common attitude links people together in a spirit of brotherhood. Today, with all the modern facilities of communication, we are more divided then we have ever been. This proves to us that a purely materialistic age will not bring the world nearer to reality. There is no special advantage in having a telephone link with America if we can communicate only a spirit of division. If on the other hand we can truly communicate, commune, then even without trans-continental telephone links, we shall be able to understand each other. It is this communion that we need in our country and we have the great opportunity to prove to the nations that we, on a whole subcontinent, with many language and diverse races, are one people. We can prove that we understand each other, that we are together and can be together and that we can appreciate each other's religion, I think we are lucky that we have all these religions. We have in India the mirror of the whole world and if we can be united within ourselves and understand each other, we are bound to understand the rest of the world because we are a reflection of the world itself. This is a great merit instead of a disadvantage.

I am not thinking of the many unhappy things which exist in our country. We all know them. We can get rid of these things only by getting rid of cruelty which is the greatest ugliness of all. As we get rid of other forms of ugliness by beauty, the ugliness of cruelty can be conquered by the beauty, by the sweetness of love. Beauty is not merely an object to look at. It is embodied in our hearts. When we see the image of Nataraja we are not merely worshipping the image externally, but worshipping it within ourselves. If we can become so identified with the spirit, nothing but tenderness and kindness, nothing but courtesy of manners and beautiful speech will fill our days. It is unfortunate that these are disappearing from the daily lives of Indians today. It is only when the real message of the heart which is the true image of India becomes alive, that we shall be able to solve all our problems. Then will the injustices disappear. We should see that India leads the spiritual life

and exemplifies it in everything. Our political freedom must be based on this, upon true spirituality and compassion, and then we shall have the solvent in which all our problems will be resolved. No more shall we have cruelty in India, no more shall the women of India be treated with inequality, no more shall the poor people be miserable. Then we shall recognise the place of every single creature in this country.

Look at the misery we have in our schools. We do not realise what is true education. When the child can learn freely and happily and when he can express his full potential, then we shall prove that in every individual there are the seeds of greatness. Instead, we still have this unfortunate superstition that a child must begin to think of education in terms of one examination after another. I do not feel any sympathy with those parents who take pride in their children, who, though of tender years, have passed all kinds of examinations. Why has the child's essential spirit been suppressed and moulded under the pressure of an examination? If in our schools, the authorities tell a parent that his child has not been passing examinations, but that he is developing a good character, the parent is not pleased. He will say that he will take the child away to another school where he does not mind if the child's character receives no attention, but he must pass his examinations. We must revolutionise our ideas through an intelligent study of the past, a visionary study of the future and courageous practice of our principles. This alone can create India anew. This alone can produce creative patriotism. We can re-establish in India that wonderful system of villages of which the present panchayat system is such an unhappy and terrible travesty. We can make these villages the true centres of our national life. We can re-establish the concept that temples, irrespective of religion, are the true centres of arts and beauty. From the spiritual life alone can come beauty and from the environment of beauty alone can come spiritual life. Only when this happens shall we be able to say that we are truly international. Then we shall have a message for other countries and we shall be able to say to them that true happiness will not come from the conquest of the phenomenal world, it must come from within. Find out what is within yourself and your country. Bring that to the forefront and we shall all be friends and there will never be another war or unhappiness in the world. This is the only way there will be lasting peace. There can be no peace when we war within ourselves. We shall all be engaged in

thinking how best we can win the next war. Real peace and happiness can come only if we show in our country that the spiritual life is the highest, is above mere cleverness, is above intellect. Then India will truly begin to live. This is what we can do without effort because we are made that way by our past and nothing else can truly appeal to us. Therefore, it will be natural for us to respond to this ideal because somewhere, even though at some distance, this ideal is still within us and we are looking for the life of that spirit. In order that India may be reborn in the new age, in order that India may contribute to its own welfare and to the welfare of the nations, in order that nations may respect us, we must be ourselves in the highest terms in which it is possible for us to express ourselves.

All this can be done only if we have a profound conviction that India is as a great as any other nation. I am afraid we have lost touch with the quality of that greatness and with the genius of our country. Therefore we do not know in what way the contribution we have to make will be different from the content of the contribution of other nations. I may say that in my opinion it has to be a definite contribution to the unity of mankind, to the cultural unity as well as to the unity that true internationalism brings. But we have a far way to go before we achieve the end and the achievement will depend upon the education we decide to give the young. Today most advances in science come from the study of problems of war. Science has become war based however much we may like to think of scientific advancement as being due to the pursuit of pure knowledge. Need science be war based? Most certainly not. It becomes used for purposes of destruction because we have not within ourselves the attitude of peace. The culture of the world today is only a thin veneer under which seethes the passion of war. When each side accuses the other of being barbarian, of being savage, of destroying the civilised world, I wonder where the truth lies. The barbarian attitude is common to the world. The destruction is mutual and though it may be started by one nation, the other nations join in. Finally, it is not any nation that wins. It is only destruction that wins though we are apt to think otherwise. Everything depends upon what we mean by being civilised. We think that if we are "up-to-date", if we are advanced in every field of technological activity, if there is wealth in the nation and the poor are few, if there are plenty of modern conveniences and comforts - this is civilisation.

I say that all this is only a triumph of mental brilliance. They can go with civilisation, but very often they do not. The best brains have been used for purposes which have nothing to do, with the spirit of culture. This is only an advance of technology which in itself is neither good nor bad but can be used for either purpose. If there is a country which, instead of boasting of the best brains, the best cars, the best aeroplanes, the best bombs, can boast of the best hearts in the world, I would call that nation truly civilised. It is not enough for us to achieve material advancement though such advancement is necessary. India, for example, is steeped in terrible poverty. This also is, in one way, a lack of civilisation. It shows that there is lack of balance in our lives which allows for so much difference, for so much unhappiness, and for so much injustice among our people. It is unthinkable that there should be so many who live very comfortably who allow so many millions to live in such unhappiness. Such a low standard of living is intolerable. We have lived so long with the suffering of our poorer brothers that we are not conscious of that suffering. Can there by any doubt that this indicates a lack of civilisation, because a civilised individual, a civilised race, a civilised nation will do everything to prevent the infliction of suffering. The only difference between a so-called civilised person and the savage is that the savage destroys in a crude, simple way while the other type destroys in a highly sophisticated fashion. In the end, the result is the same. True culture alone can remove cruelty.

One of the great characteristics of the art of all civilisations is that they blended not only with the mentality of the people, not only with their philosophy, not only did it express the highest spiritual values, but it also blended perfectly with everyday life, with nature, the landscape, the climate of the country. For example, a Pyramid or a Sphinx would be out of place here in Coimbatore. It would not blend with the nature or the mentality of the people here. In India we copy Greek statues, but we can never catch the inspiration that produced the originals. The Greek statue can never be an expression of our mentality and when we see these copies in our parks and gardens, we instinctively feel that they are misfits and that they have no connection with our civilisation at all. Every civilisation must produce its own art, according to its natural expression. It is not only the artist who creates beautifully, but actually it is in the nature of every

single individual to select instinctively that which, to him, symbolises beauty. Good taste is a matter of refinement, but the love of beauty is not a matter of refinement. When we select something we make the selection because the object of our choice pleases our eye. The choice is made according to our sense of the beautiful which may not agree with the choice of a man of highly refined taste. We may not have the same refinement of the eye, but if this urge for the beautiful in us is properly developed, it could become a great force. Even this natural instinct can be highly developed in children. They naturally choose the right colour, and recognise beauty in sound. They have an instinct with regard to the beauty of nature. This particular child-like instinct in art is one of the most important things for the development of a country. It is important that a race should have a culture which is unconsciously expressed by every single individual.

What is happening to our nation? Are we copying consciously or unconsciously. Of course our education for a long time has been such that it has made it impossible for most Indians to know India at all. When we were asked to think of great people we had to think of Julius Caesar, Abraham Lincoln and a long list of great people from the West. Greatness in India was confined perhaps to Akbar or one or two other names. Today, the situation may be better, but even when we remember the great names of India we remember with effort and not naturally. We are not as much at home with our own greatness as we are with the greatness of the Europeans or Americans about whom we have read. This becomes clear when we consider how great contemporary Indian artists are taken for granted by our people till they go abroad and gain acclaim from the west. Once they receive the applause of a Western audience that has no real knowledge of our art, and come back, we make such a fuss about them. Today the great desire of the people is to see something new in art the whole time. There is a conscious effort to discover new *ragas*, to introduce harmony into our music, and so on. All these are self-conscious, sterile efforts because they do not spring from a true creative impulse, but from a mental conception of what ought to be. Our great musicians of the past were constantly singing new *ragas*. As a matter of fact, we know certain *ragas* only through single compositions of Sri Tyagaraja. Where there is inspiration, there is always newness but, if we work only with our minds, then it is

impossible to create anything, and even if we do make something it is dull and uninteresting. This desire for continuous change is one of the keynotes of modern civilisation. If a thing is really beautiful, there would be no need for change at all. This is why we have had no such thing as fashion in our country. It is natural for us to feel that when we see something pure and beautiful, we never get tired of it. For example, we never get tired of the beauty of nature. We never get tired of beautiful poetry. The reason for this is that the inspiration which creates that beautiful poem touches us afresh each time. If we have the inspiration to create something new in the same way it will last for all time. Can we say that in India today we can create such an art that will be loved and admired for thousands years hence. I am afraid this is a vain hope. But one is still able to appreciate the beauty in many things that were created thousand of years ago, because, that creation came from the very heart of the people and was the result of single minded devotion. If there is to be a true cultural renaissance in India today, we must lay aside sterile intellectual minds and steel ourselves in the atmosphere of truth and beauty that will open the channels for the streams of inspiration to flow anew in the hearts of our people. We can never create freshness in the arts if the arts merely become a fashion. On the other hand, art must become a natural expression in our lives and it must be inspired.

Today in our country a dancer feels that if she dances a little then she is an artist. If someone paints a little, then he is a painter. No one really wishes to give himself up to the study of the art and to learn long and to learn properly. The more we learn, the more we realise how truly little we know. When we know only a little, we think we know a great deal. Many people come to me and ask to be taught dancing in a few months, at the most a year. In the old days, no good teacher would think of anybody becoming a musician unless he worked very hard for at least seven years. The Kathakali dancers of old used to be trained for about twelve years before they could appear on the stage even for a small part. These are things of the past in India. If we want to learn properly, then we must do it the hard way. There has to be a true background which must go hand in hand with proper learning, and a study that will enable us to enter heart and soul into the very spirit of art. This needs a religious minded individual. This spirit of dedication, of

reverence, of reverence to the Guru - all these are very beautiful. We may say we do not want religion because it is narrow, but there is no need for religion to be narrow. Religion may change creatively even in the form in which we have known it for hundreds of years. If we do not approve of many things in religion, it does not mean that we should give up the core of it, which is beautiful and uplifting. If we know this, then there need be no disunity between man and man and between religion and religion. Where there is beauty, there need be no difference at all. In the north, where many of the great musicians are Muslims, they sing songs about Radha and Krishna, and with what devotion they sing! Do they think of Radha and Krishna as Hidnus? They do not. They forget all this. Immediately, we rise above all barriers and unite the audience which consists of people of different beliefs into one whole unity through the sense of beauty. For all this, we must have true education. Education instead of promoting mere literacy or giving only instruction should have its background in culture. We all study for degrees and immediately after, forget whatever we have learnt in order to obtain these degrees. Why should we remember a vast amount of useless knowledge. However, we would remember if our education was practical, if our education was such that it provided a great source of inspiration for our future. This process does not end only with the education of the young, it should include the education of the public as well. I say this specifically because the mentality of the young and the old must change and we must again discover the old which will bring us back to the great unity. We have to bring about the unity not only of religions, but also of many fields of activities which exist in India and only if we do this can we be Indians, not only in the sense that we are born in India, but are Indians to our very souls. When we are truly Indians, then there is no doubt that India will achieve the pre-eminence which is her due. The whole world will say, here is the saviour, a nation which is different, a nation which is unique. If we can again live the life and regain the spirit which created the great temples, and masterpieces, then we shall create again not only as we have done in the past, but we shall build for the future, masterpieces greater than those of the past.

Obviously education is the pivot. Only true education which aims at drawing out the quality of uniqueness, which makes every student realise that true happiness

can be discovered only if happiness is given, will change the face of India. I do not minimise the vast problem that is here involved. We do not have enough imagination in education. We make it purely material and orient it completely towards job finding. There are not enough teachers and teachers that are there, are insufficiently educated and ill-equipped for their work. We do not invest the teacher with the dignity and nobility which should belong to such a great profession as of right. Our teachers enter the profession not because they have a vocation for it, but because other more lucrative pursuits evade them. How can a discontented teacher whose life is seething with frustration produce anything but an unharmonised and discontented student? How can we escape all the problems of student unrest and the attendant evils in such conditions? Where there is no love, there can be no education. The teacher must be filled with love of the young. It is only if there is love that he will understand them, and without understanding them no education is possible. In order to know someone we must love that person. If a teacher can love and inspire, he is indeed a great man and therefore makes his profession noble. A radical change of attitude towards the teacher and by the teacher is the only way of salvation for our country. Today he is an insignificant, unnoticed, ignored, despised member of the community. Yet he is the maker of the new age, the father, the mother and the friend of youth. The love with which he or she surrounds the young is the blessing that will make them grow without fear, that fear which is the root cause of all our ills today. The young will then grow without fear, with tenderness to all, with pity for the weak and with strength in the face of sorrow and suffering. Justice to all, generosity to the poor, and true brotherhood towards all creation will be the result of the love that surrounds education. But how can we expect the young to have all this when we ourselves do not possess them? How can we ask them to change when we ourselves do not wish to change? Can India change in this sense?. Yes, surely, she can, for what India has done, she can still do. Forms have changed from age to age, but the spirit of the ancient universities and schools remained the same in the Hindu, Buddhist and Islamic periods. But today this spirit is changing fast and this should be stopped.

- Lecture at Sri Avinasalingam Home Science College, Coimbatore on 7th March 1968

Custodians of Culture

It is necessary while discussing any particular phase of art that one should not be restricted by lack of time, as we are this afternoon. It requires a series of talks. Also if you have some knowledge of the art it is much easier for you to understand and for me to explain. That is why I cannot really go into a detailed explanation of the dance. In a short time it would be very difficult to demonstrate all the aspects.

I shall therefore talk generally about our culture, about Indian Art. In modern days there is a very strong liking for art. It is becoming fashionable. Everywhere people are learning dancing, painting, music, and so on. At one time it would have been impossible for such numbers of Indian women to take up these various arts and express themselves in them. Certain kinds of art are especially suited for women. Therefore it was a great pity that there was a restriction in the olden days which prevented women from learning some of the arts. Now that everywhere people are taking up art education in every form we have to remember that it must be studied in the right way. Only then can we become true custodians of our art.

The most important thing for us, as Indians is that, we should try to do as much as we can to reveal the spirit of India, in our arts, and to understand something of the deep teachings that India gives.

Art is not a matter of learning technique for a few months and then perhaps painting a picture for an exhibition. It is not the exhibition that matters. It is the power to create beautiful things, and the power still more to "feel" beautiful things. I personally think that even those who cannot do anything artistic are really artists, because everyone loves what is beautiful. Even if we cannot make or do beautiful

things, we like to look at them. All of us respond to beauty and that is why it is so necessary to surround ourselves by things that are beautiful. Beauty has upon us such a strong influence. We can see how our likes and dislikes influences us. If people like ugly things, that influences their character. If they like beautiful things, it becomes a wonderfully inspiring influence in their life.

Art has no difference of nationality or religion. In art there is no barrier of any kind. Nobody looks to see to what religion or particular country the artist belongs to when one is looking at a piece of art. We can appreciate, for example, many wonderful works of Chinese art. Beautiful things bring together great nations and make people understand each other.

Some time ago, someone asked me: "You say that we must all of us specialize in being Indian and understanding and expressing Indian art. Why should we create such barriers". To this my answer is, that if we are great in our own way, other nations will appreciate our individual genius. True art only links nations and great artists always appreciate something which is true to each nation. At present in India so few people realize how much beauty there is in our own country. It is everywhere. You do not even have to travel anywhere else to see it. People want to travel here and there, so that they can see this or that famous monument. For example, numbers of Western travelers come to India to see the Taj Mahal which is famous throughout the world. Then they visit the bazaars which shows another aspect of Indian life, and they feel that they have seen India. These are not the only aspects of Indian art and culture. The Taj Mahal is an outcome of the artistic evolution of the people. If people had not been artistic, if average workmen in those days did not have the capacity, if there had been no artists to design it, how could such a great monument have been built. Every monument is a mute witness not only of the artistic ability of the craftsmen of that period but also the high degree of the cultural advancement of the people in general.

I am not a believer in extreme modernism. Modernism usually means superficiality. You must forgive me if you take pride in being modern and smart, for this is my personal opinion. People in modern times are much influenced by the cinema and do not think much effort is required to learn any art. Take Indian

music in modern days. Music is an art that is greatly loved by Indians everywhere. In the olden days great musicians never stopped practising and learning. They worked and worked and worked until they achieved perfection, and even when they had achieved perfection, they were unaware of it. When a person studies deep any subject he feels he knows very little. Humility comes only with great knowledge. Now one of the advantages of learning anything superficially is that, we never feel that we know very little. The only way to feel learned is to learn very little! Only then do we feel that tremendous self-confidence. For the learned pundits who really know, there is only humility and knowledge of how much more there is yet to learn. For the learned people of India, especially of the older generation, when they were working at art, there was never any half-hearted work, but a tremendous discipline and one-pointed devotion towards it.

Our music, particularly in South India, and I think here also, is entirely devotional. So much of our music was and still is inspiring. What is needed is the influence of such art. Art should be able to take you to great heights, to inspire you, to thrill you, so that you feel you can do great things. But what is happening now? We have so-called modern music that is learnt within a few days and is performed in a matter of weeks. There is neither real inspiration nor talent. It is superficial.

I am talking particularly to you in this way, because I feel that generally women are less modern than men. They are the true custodians of our culture. They speak of Indian women as being illiterate, as being uneducated. Perhaps you will forgive me if I say that I am very glad that many Indian women have not been educated. Education along the lines we have now, is so wrong and it has meant giving up of all that is great and very fine in our own culture.

Take, for example, the ordinary things in our Indian homes. Our old-fashioned homes were very simple and beautiful. I like the ordinary chowkis, the mats, the brass vessels. Now people prefer sofas, chairs, tables, curtains, western clothes. To my mind these are neither beautiful, nor are they so convenient. Take the modern dress. We cannot clean it so often, for the more often it is cleaned the worse it looks and the fashion now is to wear clothes which do not need washing.

When we go into the villages and see the lives of these simple people, we are apt to say, "How much more beautiful and natural is their dress". How attractive the pots and vessels of everyday use are in the village and how much more practical.

In fact many of the things we have adopted from western culture as the latest and most up-to-date are articles of which the West is ashamed and is no longer using. Take, for example, furniture of the Victorian or Edwardian period. The West has discarded this and you find it only in India. We have not adopted the best of the West, for the West keeps changing. Take the harmonium used in our music. No one in the West would even know what it is even though it is a relic from their past. If you really want to see a harmonium you have to come to India, for we are so faithful we are still using it just as we keep all the cast-away things of the west.

If we want to be great, we must first learn to be ourselves. A great musician, a great dancer, a great artist, did not become great by copying, only by being himself. I do not say that we should not understand other cultures. The more there is understanding and appreciation between nations, the better. Here and there we may even take and use that which is best from another nation. The West borrowed from us a far more beautiful instrument than the harmonium - the flute. What we should do is to give such wonderful presents to all countries and we cannot do that except by being ourselves, and developing our own art.

The keynote of Indian culture has been for all times spiritual. Spiritual ideals thrill the Indian people. Even today if you express spiritual ideals, everybody is thrilled, and there is an immediate response. If one does the dance of Sri Krishna or Sri Nataraja, people understand and are moved. But if we danced the dance of the motorcar, where would we find Indians responding? You even laugh at the very idea, because you know that we could not respond or dance to such ideas.

Everywhere in India art has been dedicated to the Highest. For example when you go to a South Indian Temple, you will find places which are historically famous, because some great composer had read his first composition there, some great writer recited his first piece of poetry or maybe some great dancer first danced.

The Temple was the centre of culture as it should be. We offer flowers and incense in a Temple. Why should we not offer poetry, dancing, and music? They are also great creations. Flowers are the creations of God, while music, dancing, and poetry are the creations of ourselves. That is why in the South and indeed in many other parts of India, as, for example, the Manipuri dance, it is always a temple dance. It is understood that the dance belongs to the temple. That does not mean that the public cannot come to the dance. It is free for the public. Every temple had a theatre attached, because these great musical concerts, dance performances, and other forms of art were given free to the public in the name of the Deity of the Temple. That spirit even today pervades India, and my feeling is that only if that spirit pervades can India become great. Even if you do not believe in religion, you must have that spirit of dedication, the spirit of identification with your ideal, that spirit of devotion without which you cannot do great things.

All the greatest things were done because the artist was inspired by great ideals. The Greek Temples belonged to the Gods. The magnificent architecture and statues of ancient Egypt were dedicated to the Gods. The Ajanta frescoes were inspired by the life of the Lord Buddha. Everywhere you find this is so.

I was asked to say a few words about the South Indian dance. In this art also there is the same spirit of inspiration and dedication. The dance is in form what music is in sound. Dancing is not an easy thing to learn. It has to be done with the body, and because it has to be done with the body, it is more dangerous than any other art. As the body is the coarsest and most physical, it needs discipline and devotion in order to express grace and beauty. It requires the attunement of the artist to great and spiritual ideals. Such is the spirit behind this divine art.

Though dance is a very old art, it gives room for any amount of new creations and new ideas. It is an almost self-sufficient art. Most arts need scriptures or books. I am sure you would all like it if you could pass your examinations without having to memorise facts from books. Even if people cannot understand the deep philosophies in spiritual books, through the dance they can be given spiritual teaching. The dance is for all.

In Bharata Natya there are *mudras* which represent the language of the hands. Just as we have words which we pronounce, so are there words that are expressed by the gestures of the hands. Even with these ten fingers we can have hundreds of words. It is a wonderful dance that people have invented and adapted and expressed. It is easily understood but not, of course, if you have not studied it. The advantage of such a dance as Bharata Natya is that for the unlearned it is beautiful, for the slightly learned, it is enjoyable, but for the wise it opens up vistas of more learning. Therefore, it is really satisfying to every type of person. It is something that you can see with your eyes and through it learn a philosophy of life, receiving the deepest of spiritual teachings.

But this is only possible if the dancer is dedicated in spirit. It all depends on the person. It is an individual thing. Such is the spirit of this particular form of the dance. I should imagine it was the origin, the mother of all forms of Indian dancing. Wherever I go, I see in the various types of Indian dance some slight resemblance to Bharata Natya in one or another of its aspects.

That gives us a very strong ideal of what art can be, because every art should be a religion, to the world, should give a beauty that is easily understood. Beauty for which there need not be such long explanations. Does anyone have to analyze a sunset or a tree? And yet a Botanist, would understand the miracle of plant life and would realize what a wonderful and magnificent life a tree had. So it is true that the deeper our understanding of art, the more will it give us. If an art is to help civilization it has to be a great and inspiring art.

Though the people who can create are few, the people who can appreciate are many. In all our schools and colleges, there should be art-appreciation classes, so that people should know how to understand beauty. Our eyes are now like those of new-born children, our eyes are not fully open to see and to recognize beauty. Gradually will our eyes become opened, so that we will be able to go along the street and see what is beautiful. If we can see what is beautiful we can become beautiful. That is the best beauty-secret, because it affects character and without character there cannot be beauty. If you think of people or nations, wherever there is great character, there you see beauty.

Beauty is not merely our own analysis of form. Beauty is an expression of the soul. If we are to express the soul of India, we must express our genius in our own way. In order to do that we must become Indian and appreciate all that is in India. Only than can we appreciate all that is beautiful in other cultures. We must learn to appreciate all that is beautiful in our traditions. May be our grandmothers and grandfathers can help us appreciate, because they still have some thing of the spirit, of olden India.

Many Western people say," When we came to India we cannot get Indians to do what we want." But the same is equally true in England or anywhere else. If you give a small Indian thing to an English workman and ask him to replace it, he cannot do it. For example, give a pair of ordinary Indian chappals that any cobbler can make and an English bootmaker cannot copy these. He will probably say, "How unusual, what extraordinary work. We cannot do it." There is something in each nation that determines its own genius. Certain things we can do more easily than other things. Every nation has the capacity to do that which is along its own line. That is why it suits us more if we are Indian.

I am not trying to say that there is nothing of worth, in Western civilization. Let us appreciate China, let us appreciate Egypt and the cultures of every single country in the world. But let us represent the spirit of India in our country and develop our art in our own way.

I think the spirit of India is really in the heart of our Indian women, our Indian mothers. I really sincerely admire and appreciate tremendously the Indian woman and I am so thankful that they are very much less westernized than man.

I am told Delhi is very fashionable. No? I am very happy to hear it. I feel braver than I did three minutes ago!. I think the real spirit of India, the ancient culture of India, is expressed very much by the women of India. I think we are all of us responsible to see that the young people, our children and our brothers and sisters, are brought up to appreciate our land, our soil, our poor people, our traditional Indian costumes and simple ways of Indian life that is so beautiful. Did you know that some western scientists say that the aluminum vessels we are now using,

poison the food. We have been using poison in order to copy the West. Our Indian vessels were so extraordinarily beautiful, so simple, so hygenic. There are the little earthenware pots if we cannot afford brass. Simple little pots that can be thrown away after use. That is why life in India was so practical and so easy. We do not have to walk miles and miles to see our culture. We can be inspired even by our own homes if we make our homes beautiful and simple.

Simplicity is the essence of art, and every home should become, as it was in ancient days in India, a centre of art and culture. Every home should become a studio of art, an art school, as it was and should be. Indian women have a great responsibility toward achieving this.

If we can do that, we shall save India. Not only would we save India but we would have brought to modern India something the whole world will respect. People of the world come today to see India, because India is so beautiful a country. But thousands of years hence they will come to see what we have created today, as we today are inspired by the creations of thousands of years ago. Surely we must create something future generations will be proud of. I think the women of India have the capacity and great spirit to express such beauty. They can help India relive her very great and magnificent past, but adding new splendour, new beauty, so that India will fulfil her mission to the whole world.

- Lecture to students, Indraprastha College, New Delhi - 18th December 1940

The Spiritual Significance of Art

Friends, I am grateful to Dr.Kalidas Nag for this very warm introduction which I am not sure that I really deserve. I can only speak of my ideals rather than of my achievement, because whatever I have achieved is still only an effort in the direction of these ideals. I am also very happy to speak in the atmosphere of the Rama Krishna Mission, for I believe that art and religion go together. When I say religion, I do not have in mind the usual conception of religion; because I believe in the religion that is the essence of all religions. Someone asked me to what religion I belonged. I replied *"I cannot say that I belong to any particular religion but I do belong to religion"*. This is my attitude to art also, since art to me is not merely entertainment in the ordinary sense of the word. Art has been described as the language of the gods. There is no doubt that it is the languages of the gods. To speak that language the only thing an artist has to do is not to express his own idea of art, but to allow it to flow through him. People talk of creative art. What is creative art? Art has to be created just as life has to be created. What is not creative is dead. The growth of art is evolution. Philosophy should be creative, life should be creative. When we are free and alive, not dead in our ideas, we automatically become creative. This creative spirit is evolution, because we only create as we evolve. It is really that urge which is inside expressing itself, that makes us grow and create. We are eternally finding inspiration within ourselves and if we are tapping that eternal source then we are automatically creative.

When we speak of creative art, what do we really mean? We have to make a very clear distinction between *invention* and *creation*. The spirit behind invention and the spirit behind creation are two entirely different things. Invention is of the mind but creation is not only of the mind, it is also of the spirit and therefore, it is

something larger, it is more cosmic. So in the latter, there is creative power and creative energy. In order that we my create the beautiful and give it a body, we develop a technique. What is technique? It is a discipline of the body. Now everyone has to have discipline. If there is no discipline, there is no original creation. It is a most curious thing we have to learn; to achieve control in order to be free. We have to be controlled in order to be uncontrolled, so to speak. A river cannot flow except it has banks. In the same way technique constitutes the banks within which the creative spirit flows. This is why in ancient days it was said that to be a musician or a dancer was the same as to be a yogi. Only the expression is different. From control, from discipline, we grow into something more; we evolve into something greater than the discipline we learn. We use the technique in order to forget the technique. The most important thing about technique is that it trains us to forget it. When we rise above ourselves, we rise above the physical. And then what happens? We are no more there. It is not we who are there anymore, it is something else that fills and informs us. This is why I say that art is not just entertainment. I do not believe in an art that is merely for the camera, for the stage, for the pleasure of the people who come to see and hear only when they do not know what else to do. Unfortunately we have an idea that art belongs to what we call leisure. It is true that it belongs to leisure, only we do not understand what constitutes leisure. It is in leisure that we are most natural, most unconscious of ourselves; when we learn without realising that we are learning. I think that we learn most when we are not thinking about it, when we have forgotten ourselves in pleasure. It is because we have to forget ourselves in art that it is such a magnificent thing. Its key-note is joy. Naturally, art is one of the foremost of expressions that belongs to humanity.

Take, for instance, dance or drama. In these two arts all the emotions that move humanity have to be expressed. Perhaps, people do not realise what a great deal there is to learn about emotions through art. The Psychologists, think they have made the great discovery of the nature of the human mind. But I can say positively that by the study of the dance I have also made a great discovery that is not really mine alone. I have discovered that what our great sages and rishis have given to the world through this art is something amazing; a marvellous and remarkable science of

the emotions. This science is perhaps the highest science of all, because it is the science by which we know ourselves as well as other people. Modern science teaches us to know about everything except ourselves. If we do not know something about ourselves there is no use trying to know about anything else.

Now, the Natyasastra of Bharata is derived from the sage Bharata. Perhaps Dr. Kalidas Nag does not realize that the Natyasastra also had its origin somewhere in the north-west of India, because according to tradition, it was first given to the princesses of Saurashtra from where it spread elsewhere into India. Its purity has been maintained in the South, perhaps more purity of form and technique than of the spirit. The spirit had become very much degraded and unfortunately had tended to become a personal possession. And once art becomes personal, becomes a way of exhibiting oneself rather than the art, then it automatically becomes degraded and ultimately dies. Of all the arts dance is the most difficult from the point of view of the sheer physical work involved and even from the point of view of spiritual work. Dance is the expression through the body; it is the physical body that has to work, that has to manifest the art. A person who dances may like to show off, but this is fatal, for, in art, one does not exhibit the artist but the art. Also, most important to consider, dance is an art which is expressed through the body. This is at once, its danger and its glory. In the dance, the body has to become so non-physical, so that those who see it forget the body has a physical entity. But the moment art is made personal and at all physical, it becomes degraded because, then, it will express sensuality. It is very important to direct it to a very high purpose. Therefore, the dance is a marvellous art because it has not only to express the emotion of the mind but has also to express this emotion through the physical body. This is why I call dance, the music of the body. This is what it really is. It is the music of the body and the music must live in the limbs. In music, if music is real, there is not only *tala* which is Yoga, but a *laya*, which is the rhythm within *tala.* It is, so to speak, the *Sukshma Sarira* the invisible body of the *tala,* the inner side of the *tala,* and rhythm which in music, is the dance of the emotions.

In this way we find that all art is blended together and forms one unity. If we truly understand the spirit of art, we can understand all the arts. Occasionally,

people say, *I understand this art but I do not understand the others.* In such cases it means that they have not understood art but think they have understood it. We have to feel the spirit and then only can we understand the form. When I first went to Western countries I heard great Western classical music. I could not understand it and it was even painful for me to hear; so many notes apparently contradicting one another. But in the audience I saw many people entranced, inspired. So I tried to understand the technique which in the beginning was not easy. And I can say this, that somehow, suddenly I began to enjoy Western music, although, I can never appreciate any other form of it except the classical. Acutally, to appreciate art whether eastern or western, is a form of meditation because you have to enter the realm of the spirit.

Sometimes people ask me how long it took me to compose *Kumara Sambhava*. I always say it took me six years of meditation and eleven days of composition because I did compose the *Kumara Sambhava* exactly in eleven days. But it was the back-ground of so many years of thought and feeling that finally produced the result. To-day in India, what we have to do is to understand the reality behind art and to realise its spiritual significance. They say that India is not interested in religion any more. I ask, *why should religion look like religion?* Can something not be equally religious that may not look like religion as it is ordinarily understood? Such a thing is art. Through spiritual art we can spiritualise our nation. That is how I feel. Everywhere in India to-day, we are becoming much more conscious about art than we ever were before. The enthusiasm is great. But, when enthusiasm works without discrimination and without taste it produces sad results. This manifests in the craze for modern art. There is such a craze and it needs to be controlled. Art has to be an expression of dedication and dedication is necessary. Unless this is so, I am afraid art can do more harm than good. We do not ordinarily realise what a great force art is. It is not merely technique, something that we see or hear. It is a force by which our emotions can be lifted or, on the contrary, made vulgar. Just as, through this medium, we can elevate the whole nation and can do great good to the country as a whole, so can we also do incalculable harm to humanity if art becomes vulgar, crude or degraded. If we allow that which masquerades as art also to flourish,

then we allow our culture to become degraded which is a very tragic thing.

We all speak of Indian art and we are very proud because our country is rich in all forms of art. To have many kinds of art does not make a country cultured. What we want is real art. According to me beauty is a necessity in art. If there is no beauty there is no art. Very often, hideous things are presented as art. To me, this is a sacrilege, because ugliness can never be an expression of art. It can occasionally be an expression of technique, of genius even, but certainly, only of evil genius. Ugliness can never be spiritual. So, beauty is absolutely necessary, because beauty is spiritual. The idea of beauty flowers in any great conception. In the Ramayana, Rama is not described unless it be in beautiful words. If it is a description of His appearance, all the time we find the beauty of the individual made an essential. It is in His face, in His voice, His speech, His laughter; in every detail. It is a necessity that has been made the vehicle of something greater. Therefore, I consider that not only must there be beauty in expression, but that art must find translation in living. It must ennoble people. If it is not ennobling it is not art anymore.

Education has been badly neglected in many ways, but chiefly, in that art has no place in it at all of any importance. That is one of the defects of life to-day. The older generation cannot understand the younger generation. But they have one advantage over the young. They had beautiful homes in which there was a beautiful atmosphere which went with the culture that had been handed down from ages ago. But, in our days, this is also disappearing, because, in our homes the radio and the cinema reign and they corrupt the soul of the child. When the child goes to the school, he has to contend with text-books and examinations which finally kills all his creative fervour. What a tragedy this is! One of the most important changes to accomplish is in the present mode of education. I have a school, an art centre where the children train to become artists. Parents bring me very fine children. They say "my child has absorbed all the education he can. Now give him art education". When they find their sons and daughters unfit for any other kind of education, then, art is thought of. This is what I am always coming across. Unconciously, we pay no respect to art and it is not placed on a pedestal it ought to

occupy. But, before we place it on the pedestal, we should also learn something about it, understand something about it and also realise what a great and marvellous expression it really is. If art plays the part it should play in the country, I feel sure that the character of the people would change because I think that art changes character far more than lectures, do. I feel that is the great place of art in life.

In India we have began to take an interest in art but we have a great work to do which we cannot do unless we believe sincerely, not only in art, but also in its background. We must realise that so much of what we call India has been a gift to us from the great sages. I have studied Western art also, and I can appreciate Western art. One factor of importance with West is that their great traditions of classical art are alive; ours have nearly died. Therefore, the Western nations have a good idea of their own arts. True, they have also vulgar expressions like the night-club, music dance and so on. But they do know the difference between Bach and Jazz. In our country, we do not know what is classical and what is not and many do not have the understanding to have the discrimination. If we have discrimination, we shall know what to emphasize. Indeed, in our country anything goes for classical art. When I was learning Bharata Natyam I found they danced to many songs based on kings often only of strictly local importance. Occasionally, the song was on a Collector or somebody like that ! And I discovered that when they danced a song on a king, they described him as if we were Rama or Krishna. But when the subject of the dance was Krishna or Rama, they would be described as ordinary kings. In other words, they vulgarised the Gods and elevated human beings.

All the songs we dance to are of Gods and Goddesses. You may ask, "Why so many Gods and Goddesses"? The only reply that I can give is, *"Why not so many Gods and Goddesses?"* If we believe in the divinity of life, then we are all Gods and Goddesses. This is the principle that makes art so elevating. In art, we can make something most exquisite out of something so ordinary. In the same way, when great musicians sing the story of Rama and Sita, simple ordinary stories; how divine, how full, how rich they become. So, it is the mind of man and its attitude that gives art its character, not only the subject. As we know, even an elevating subject can be made cheap: I have seen dances on Krishna and Radhika

made so vulgar that I did not want to acknowledge that Radhika or that Krishna. Why was something so divine made so common? Because the spirit of the artists was attuned to vulgarity.

It is not only the person who performs who is an artist; he who sees and enjoys is also an artist. We do not realise that the audience is also composed of artists and the art of the individual changes according to the nature of the artists, who constitute the audience. There are two types of artists: there is the visionary, the spiritual individual who leaves the world behind. He may be far ahead because he is sensitive to higher things. So he presents a higher world to this world. There also is the artist who leads. Artists are temperamentally emotional and if someone is a great artist, he is sensitive to higher things. Some times it is said that art reflects what is in the world. But a great artist not only reflects what is in the world he also leads the world. On the other hand if there is vulgarity, or crudity in the mind., it comes out in the art. Long before a human catastrophe such as war happens, we see the foretaste of it in the art galleries, in the music, in the dance. I think the character of a nation can be seen through the artists because artists are sensitive to what is going on and they give not merely a portrait of what they are thinking but a portrait of themselves and of civilisation. But there are a few, only a very few stars in the firmament of art, individuals who change thought, who show not merely what is going on around, but indicate the ultimate goal.

The most beautiful aspect of art is that it is like a messenger from the gods, the *devas* to the world of human beings. The dance has the physical body as its instrument but when it is sublimated it becomes different, it becomes transcendant, it becomes no more physical, it becomes a marvellous and a beautiful expression of reality. This is the image which I feel we must have in our minds. Why does the story of *Kumarasambhava* please me? It is because of the symbolism. Finally what Parvati wins is not passion but the devotion and the sublimation of herself. Parvati wins Siva and she becomes united with Him, because she has discovered the greater, indeed the only way of discovering God. This is very beautiful symbology. Siva burnt to ashes all that is physical. So must a dancer or musician burn to ashes all thought which is dross and bring out the gold which is within. This is my conception of art. It is perhaps a very great conception, but I do not

think that it is above the mind even of a child. I find that children are receptive if we give them the background, if we give them understanding.

The responsibility of the artist is a very great responsibility. For, by his art, he can help civilisation, he can change character, and he can make or mar a country. So much power does he really have. Great changes, of course, depend upon the really great artists such as are giants in the field of art. We need people who live in this world and yet who do not belong to this world. Such artists will surely change the way of life. My opinion is that when this is done we shall be much nearer to peace than the peace of which politicians talk. We can sign a document today which will be of no use tomorrow. People talk of a change of heart; but this change cannot be created without the atmosphere which is necessary. Through art we can produce that atmosphere of beauty. India is specially rich, for there is no part of our country where there is no art and it is amazing to discover that the so called ignorant people have a much better, instinctive understanding of art, a much purer understanding than those that are educated. But what is unconscious has to become conscious.

One important thing to notice in Indian art is that it is impersonal. Therefore, we do not know who built the great temples, who painted the pictures, the frescoes. This keeping of the personal element out of art is the great ideal of India to which we should come again. India has had a marvellous past, and I think India can have a future, if we have the right kind of artist. People sometimes ask, "Why do you go back to the India of the past; do you not want something new in art?" Well, I do not believe in the kind of new art which people talk about. Art automatically renews itself. Why should we strain and break our brain in order to create it? Forced creativeness is very unnatural. We find forced creativeness in our modern life, because there is no inspiration in it. We do not know what to do and we have to invent art. I do not believe in art that belongs to time and is of the past, present or future. True art is eternal. What I consider beautiful is beautiful for all time.

– Lecture at Rama Krishna Mission Institute of Culture, Calcutta, on 11.02.1956

Interpreting Indian Culture Abroad

Since India became free the question of presenting Indian culture abroad has become one of vital moment. In a curious way India has discovered that the one way to win the appreciation of foreigners is to show them what is Indian culture. Owing to foreign rule Indian culture gradually became submerged until Indian themselves slowly lost interest and even forgot what Indian culture was. But, during the past few years there has been a sudden revival of interest in music, dance, drama and painting. Rabindranath Tagore started a renaissance particularly in the field of literature, painting and drama, yet his was a lonely voice crying in the wilderness. People were not much interested in his work until he became an international figure by winning the Nobel prize. His work went on for nearly thirty years before other factors came into our National life to give an impetus to Indian Art. I remember how even in 1930 Indians generally, except those of an older generation did not know what Bharata Natya was and did not even know that it existed. Similarly there were great geniuses amongst the classical musicians both of the North and the South. Many of them almost starved for want of appreciation and understanding. Then came a time of discovery and artistic revival followed by freedom for India. Several circumstances arose with this freedom. Embassies came into existence. Indians began to go abroad more than ever. New types of Westerners began to come into India.

During British rule in India, though Westerners were seen everywhere, you never heard of any important visitor or official ever taking an interest in the Indian dance. Nor did anyone perform such dances in Concert halls. Now the Westerner who comes, is deeply interested in Indian art, Indian culture, Indian philosophy and Religion. This moment is the period of our trial, because just when the world

has awakened to the potential of India and opportunities are available to Indians to exhibit their art we are caught unprepared. Indian art has lost its purity and has become a perfect expression of the denationalising that had been taking place prior to freedom. The world asks for Indian Culture. Alas! Indians do not know this culture, which they long to interpret to the West. But having become western in outlook, thought and expression, Indians can only interpret that which has already become unIndian. So when a dance is presented it is presented with an Indian form and a Western soul. When music is presented it is again a superficial melody that is influenced by the mongrel music that the cinema has been producing. While Art is presented, that element which should be behind it to give it life is not there. Generally speaking there is not even a perception that the background which goes back thousands of years is important. To me, Indian culture is not only that which is presented in the form of art or philosophy but is a synthesis of a whole civilization. Its expression is in every aspect of life. Just as the sunlight when broken and dispersed becomes the rainbow with varying colours, so is the soul expressed diversely in every aspect of life. You cannot truly represent culture by *presenting* it or *interpreting* it. You can do it successfully only when you have become that culture. Prior to freedom, Indians were gradually developing an inferiority complex. It shows itself now by our longing for the praise of others. My opinion is that we should spend a great deal of time in the study of everything Indian. We all have to re-educate ourselves more and more and make up for the years we have lost. When you go to foreign countries and particularly to America you hear them speaking of their way of life. "The American way of life" is a common expression in America. Indians do not know the "Indian way of life". It is very necessary to know it. We must have a thorough grounding in India's background and greatness. We must know it, we must believe in it and we must love it, which does not necessarily mean a lack of appreciation of the culture of other countries. If we understand our culture well, we can also understand other cultures.

Culture is like a garland of flowers. The flowers may be different but the thread that binds it is the one universal spirit. This is proved by Western lovers of art. The greatest artists of the West and deep thinkers have shown a keen appreciation of Indian culture and art. In fact most often one finds that the Westerner is

able to discriminate between the pure and the unreal in Indian art far better than many Indians do. On the other hand very rarely are Indians able to appreciate true Western Art. Classical music and dance is a living tradition in the West. By constant contact with this tradition they have become sensitive to other classical forms of art.

If we can have a course in Indian Culture which every Indian is compelled to study before he gets a passport, there may be an improvement in the present situation. At present the lack of knowledge and appreciation of India in the average Indian abroad including many who travel on cultural delegations is tragic. They only display their ignorance. The saddest thing of all is that Indian culture is being presented abroad only because other countries want it, not because we believe in it or love it with all our hearts.

Because of this, dancers and musicians present Indian art as they think the Westerner wants it presented. We think they want short items, we think they want variety, we think they cannot appreciate the classical. I know that they can appreciate the classical and it can be given whether in short or long items and there is no country where such magnificent variety is possible than in India. Indian painting and crafts as exhibited are also lacking in taste, a characteristic that unfortunately distinguishes our present day crafts.

Indian embassies are not examples of the Indian way of life either. We are more foreign than ever we have been either in the days of the British or in the days of the struggle for Freedom. Until we become Indian we cannot interpret India. The only way to represent the soul of a nation is through its culture for culture is the essence of a nation. To represent the soul through art, poetry, philosophy and daily life, we have to drink from the deep waters of the everlasting spring that comes from the spirit of the Divine. This is no easy task. To me art is the expression of divinity and art is the way for humanity to catch a glimpse of the God that he worships. Every individual who has understood this quality is an artist and he is in himself or herself an ambassador of culture.

Art is the direct result of harmony in life. Discord cannot produce music.

Similarly it cannot produce art. In India today we need that harmony in all aspects of life. Though there is a love for art, there is no understanding of the art of living. Indian people are no longer interesting to look at. Visitors from abroad when they came to India a hundred years ago, saw beauty and variety in our country. Every part of India had different costumes, colour and variety and everything was in impeccable taste. Today, though they want to produce variety on the stage, there is nothing but monotony and uniformity in life. With such a background how can we interpret our culture to other nations?. We have to remember that there are two aspects to the presentation of culture. One when the Indian goes abroad and is a representative of his country and two when those abroad come to us. When they come to us, what do we show them? Are our clothes beautiful? Do they see India in the Indian? We wear western clothes, we have westernised our homes, our offices and our habits without borrowing anything of the western ideas of beauty. So when they come to us we don't show them what is Indian, because we are alien to our own culture. It is not the guide or the travel bureau that interprets India, but our monuments, our unsophisticated and fortunately uneducated country people and often the artist who is not so popular. When we go abroad we cannot take these with us. Those artists who are devoted to their art and simple Indian ways rarely go far from their homes for they are neither fashionable nor do they appeal to the box office. On the whole it seems to me that our work today is to rebuild the nation culturally, through every form of art including architecture and reconstruct our nation through the expression of its own genius so that once more we attract other nations to us as we did in the past. It is our life that will represent India to the world and when we have built a strong foundation, we shall be strong enough to build the superstructure. When we have built the nation on these lines we can help the world. Then every Indian will become an ambassador, a messenger of the true spirit and soul of India whether the Indian be a potter with his clay pot or the highest intellectual who has attained the perfection of simplicity. When we have all realised this need, from that moment we shall be ready to take the message of India's soul to all people and to all nations.

- All India Radio - 14.08.1953

Vallathol Memorial Lectures

Lecture No.1

I realise from what your Vice-Chancellor has said that I have had very distinguished men to precede me in delivering these lectures. Personally, I do not consider I am a speaker because my language is not words. Therefore, I hope you will be able to understand and appreciate what I am trying to express. I prefer to speak extempore as I am used to that and I am happy to know that the Vice-chancellor, the Registrar and many others have felt that I may be allowed to give my speech without having it written down. I hope you will forgive this departure from the usual procedure.

First of all, I would like to pay my tribute to that supreme poet and supporter of art, Mahakavi Vallathol Narayana Menon. I had the great privilege of having known him well. I knew him even before I began my career in art. In the early years, I saw a Kathakali performance presented by him during a Theosophical Convention at Adyar. At that time, in Madras, no one knew about Kathakali. Indeed, it may be said that only a few had any feeling for Indian art in general. I remember the great impression that the performance made on me and on many others. Dr.Cousins was another like him who always encouraged such art. He was also a great friend of the poet. Later on, when we met, our conversation became rather one-sided. He could not hear very well and one had to use the language of the hand, in order to converse with him. We could easily understand each other through *abhinaya* and to me this was a delight.

The subject that I have chosen is *Art and Culture in Indian life*. It seems strange that I have to speak about such a topic, which should have been studied and

thought about by every educated Indian. As a matter of fact, we are still in the process of learning not only what is art, what is our culture, but also what is its spirit and its expression. The people who are most ignorant of Indian culture, I am sorry to say, are Indians. This sounds very strange but it is a fact. In many countries abroad, there are large numbers of people who are eagerly trying to understand India, Indian culture, Indian art, Indian philosophy and so on. Art plays a very important part in the life of all nations and greatly influences its culture. Conversely, it may be said that culture forms the background against which art develops. Art is the expression which emerges out of the total culture and out of the philosophical background of the country, and our art is no exception to this. Indeed, in our country, art has been specially close to the life of the people and has been very much a part of their daily existence.

Culture is something which interpenetrates every aspect of life. It is not easy to say what is part of it and what is not. There is nothing apart from it and so it is a part of life. In our country, there has been a great philosophy of the art that is unique. There is no part of the world in which there is no art. Even among the so-called savages who are not cultured in the sense that we understand culture, there is the love of beauty and there is that expression which we call art and which arises out of that sense of beauty. The more unspoilt the race, if I may say so, the more un-educated in the ordinary sense of the word, the greater the appreciation of beauty, the greater the instinctive response to beauty.

This response is an instinct which is born in every human being. The child responds to it. One may say one of the first things to which a child responds, is beauty. It loves colour, it loves trees and nature. It loves birds and the flowers, because this is the natural instinct. This instinct does not leave us at any time, but in spite of this, we cannot say we show a proper response nor can we say that every single person is artistic or cultured. This is the result of wrong conditioning, and wrong acclimatisation. Though the instinct lives in us, we have to have training and discipline, in order that it may flower. We have to understand the philosophy, the background and a whole series of circumstances that follow from these. Without training, this instinct is overlaid by a lack of sensitivity and we cease to differentiate

between ugliness and beauty fully. This is where the tragedy of man is located and that is why, I feel it is a very important to think in terms of an education which will consider art and culture as a central principle.

If anyone says that India is not a cultured country, I would ask him, "in that case, which is a cultured country"? I know that there are many circumstances in India today which might induce a stranger to make a superficial judgement. So many things in modern life are anti-cultural, but, broadly speaking, the true values that we hold dear in our country have been dictated by its culture the idea of which is so extraordinarily comprehensive that it envisages every aspect of life. Even in the western countries, they judge a person and his standing in a cultured society by the way he behaves even in small details. If a man eats gracefully, moves in a graceful way, laughs in a restrained way, speaks low, such a person would be usually considered as being well brought up and well bred.

Of course, it may be said that this is superficial judgement, depending upon mere external behaviour. This is where in India we differ. It is not merely the question of being well bred, depending upon your table manners or how one says, "Thank you" and that sort of thing. It is much more than all that. Here, we say a man is cultured, when he brings with him an atmosphere of the spiritual, of the higher life. Our civilisation is comprehensive and so very great, that culture which is considered to be a cosmic concept is made acceptable and possible for expression in our daily life.

It is not possible to give a precise definition of culture because it permeates all life. There is nothing outside it because it shows itself in everything in which we participate. Only it depends on how we participate in life, with what attitude, and this attitude makes all the difference. Sometimes, we think that a man, if he is very learned, and is a scholar, is highly cultured. But this may not be always so. Such a man may be only a great scholar. But he may lack in sensitivity, in the aesthetic sense. He may be lacking in understanding; he may fail in his relationships with people and with life. We come across these types of people in our lives. A man may not be fully cultured, but may embody one aspect of culture. But when we think of the concept of the total, that concept must be something which permeates

our inner lives. It must rule our emotion, our intellect and must be a direct manifestation of our higher self. It is very important for us to realise how much a part of our life it is. In India today, we need this understanding very badly. We may think perhaps that we have evolved a great deal, that we have prospered. Perhaps, the politician will say, we have prospered greatly, but an artist like me will say, we have not prospered. We actually talk more about art now than we did before, but we had more art earlier than we have now. This is a fact and our understanding of art and our sensitivity to it is less. But we certainly do talk more about it. Therefore, I do not think that we can truly say that we have evolved greatly during these many years as far as the artistic or the cultural life of the country is concerned.

I think one of the greatest destroyers of culture and I hope you will forgive me for saying it, is politics and you may wonder why I say this. You may wonder why I hold this opinion. I have noticed that politics encourages talking, often talking, without a real knowledge of what one is talking about. I think it is an effect of politics that we talk so much about art while knowing so little about it. The more we talk, the less cultured we usually become. Of course, politics has a great impact upon our country, because laws are changed, reforms are made, and all kinds of things happen on account of political activity. There is no doubt, that politicians are a very important group of people, but if only they were also cultured in the true sense of the word how wonderful it would be for our country! Who can bring in a law about art? Who can declare what art is? Fortunately, there is no lawyer who can lay down a statute with regard to art. Fortunately, there is no lawyer who can say *this is beauty* and *this is ugliness*. Usually, the lawyer lacks that sixth sense. He is very intellectual.

Even in a University, training tends to be merely intellectual. This is perhaps not at all a right thing for me to say here in this university. More so, because, it is not that I do not respect intellectuals, but if the intellect is not conditioned by a proper development of the emotions, by a proper sense of relationship, by the development of sensitivity, a development that will be lopsided will result and this will not create the environment in which a citizen who is integrated can flourish.

Mere intellect only tends to destroy on account of its purely analytical nature. While pure intellect can be meticulous about facts, it often leads away from the Truth. However, there is in all men, an instinct, an intuition that sends them on in a search for Truth. Mere intellect leads to argument and not to conclusion. It is important for civilisations not to be dominated by something which is sectional, as otherwise, they become lopsided. A country cannot progress in this way. When we speak of a great nation, what is it that we mean? A great people, a wonderfully and truly civilised race, is one that has had a great outward expression of the inner grace that we call *culture*. We think of ancient Greece as highly civilised. In that country, there were great philosophers, great artists, sculptors, great poets, dramatists and so on. People considered that Greek civilisation was great because it was based upon the foundation of culture.

This particular point of view is very important for it fosters the integrated development of an individual who, while he expresses himself fully, expresses himself also as an integral part of the community. It does not mean that in such a race, in such a country, everybody is an artist but the background physical, spiritual and cultural - will form the right setting in which automatically, outstanding artists will emerge, outstanding musicians, outstanding writers, great poets and so on. They appear as a galaxy to inspire the world. Also, in such a case, a nation rises to a very high level of thinking, a very high standard of living, but this does not at all indicate luxurious living. Such a situation is not created by any particular political, social or economic theory. We have to remember this and then we can say, that of all the countries in the world, India has been rightly considered to be a country of real culture. If people from all over the world have from earlier periods, wanted to invade India, if legions have striven to conquer the land, it was because of the attraction that India held for them. Even today, this attraction persists. Many want to come and they do not want to go back. I do not quite understand this, because I do not think that there is so much in modern India that warrants such an attraction, but even so, some who come to this country do feel the inner spirit of life such as it has been lived through the ages. An atmosphere has indeed been created by the thoughts, by the way of life, by the greatness that has existed in our motherland, and we may say that it is still possible to contact that particular spirit. Those who

come from abroad seeking this and are sensitive to it feel it at once. In my opinion, this substratum of refined sensitivity has almost been destroyed.

This undefinable atmosphere that our ancients provided is our strongest point. Without it, we are nothing. We cannot compete with others in technology, in science and the various developments that make the world such a complex machine. Our Indian mind may be great enough to achieve all this, but, in the process of achieving that success, we will have destroyed something the like of which the world has never known elsewhere. This is what has made India unique. It is the unique gift that India has to give to the world and this is why India has had a position which no other country has had. It does not mean that other countries do not possess great art. China has great art. One of the greatest, most beautiful periods in the history of art is to be seen in China. The same may be said of Japan or of Russia. But in all these cases, though beauty is expressed in such an exquisitive way, I would say that they are none of them examples of the art which is allied to the permanent values of life. On the other hand this is what we gave in India.

Our arts are an expression of permanent values. This particular attitude is of extreme importance in living the life. It enables one easily to become a real person. We become ourselves and by doing that, we can ourselves become works of art. Once we achieve this, this completeness can never leave us. This eternal attitude, the spirit of eternity, is something that the great among the Indians, our sages and our saints have always taught in our country. We cannot completely get away from this tradition. There may be tendencies that try to pull us away from it. We may think we have to be new and follow the example of other peoples. What does this newness consist of? Will this newness be equally great, equally profound, equally spiritual, equally inspiring, equally beautiful. In empty newness, there is nothing new at all. Such newness is just transitory. At this point, I would like to mention some of the modern music and art forms which come and go. That which is eternal is that which is inspired by the innermost self of man, and as such it expresses itself through intuition, through perfection, through ability to know the reality. However much we may produce extraordinarily clever creations of the so called modern art, inspired art is different because art that has been mentally and forcibly created

cannot be real. Art is a natural emotional experience, the product of the highest order. Such an art is tremendously important to civilisation because it is the refiner of the emotions, the purifier of the emotions. Its inspiration is such that it elevates the emotions. It does not produce the emotion that destroys, but encourages that which builds.

We always forget the fact that even our best education is purely intellectual. There is no chance in it for the training of the emotions or for the training of what one would call the individual. We may understand the entire Universe, but we do not understand each other. We study science, we know something about Mars, something about the Moon and everything else, except our own minds and selves. If we can know ourselves, then only can we know our next door neighbour ?. You may say, do I not know my next door neighbour?. Do I not understand him? We cannot understand him until we understand ourselves. We are not tolerant with others when we are not fully tolerant with ourselves. We think we understand ourselves although we really do not. This is why it is so very important to realise that emotional, intellectual and spiritual education must all go together in one great harmony. It is the combination of these three that produces what may be called a complete individual - an integrated person. Such education does not stop at the school or college but continues until our very death. I say till we die because we are apt to think that education ends with the University. In a very proper sense, it must be said to begin after the University. The responsibility is thrown upon us to react to our environment in an integrated manner more after we leave the university. We face life then, and we have not been trained in our schools and colleges what to do in such a situation. We do not know how to react to life.

The background of Indian culture has come from religion. We may ask what has that to do with it and what are we to do now? Are we going to make any progress in our artistic evolution without religion? In my opinion, we cannot do so. But we do not know the real psychology of India and do not know the real thought of India. According to me, when I speak of religion, I mean an attitude of mind, a way of thinking and it has nothing to do with any particular faith. We, unfortunately, consider it to mean something narrow, emphasising differences so that it is no

longer that which unites but is that which differentiates. All the time we are concentrating on the differences of religion and do not pay enough attention to that which creates. This inspiration has been produced by the spirit of reverence, the spirit of devotion, the inspiration derived from greatness and from great ideas. This is what India has had always. If we want traditional art, we cannot get away from the spirit of religion. Many people may say that they do not believe in religion. But all the same, they want the Nataraja, they want other images which are all created by the spirit of religion. Tourists from abroad come to Ajanta and see the frescoes, which delineate the story of the Buddha. All the things that attract tourists such as Mahabalipuram sculptures were created by those whose life was lived in religion. Please remember that when I use the word *religion*, I use it in the spiritual sense. For me art is religion, beauty is religion. Ugliness is the opposite of it. Unfortunately, we are today pursuing ugliness, not beauty, particularly because we have not yet developed the knowledge or idea of what India has stood for, and partly because, we have not yet lost the appetite for what comes from other countries. But I do know when I go abroad, how to separate the good from the bad. If we do not know and if we copy blindly, then we are in dangerous waters. This is the sad experience which we are passing through because we are losing what is India in Indian art.

Please remember that true culture is creative and it is bound to develop in new ways and formulate new expressions even without our effort. What we need to develop is our perception. If we do this, we shall be able to develop our genius and our creative ability. Automatically, it will begin to flow as water flows in the river. Creative expression can never be curtailed if experience is there. Therefore, it is not a question whether we believe or do not believe in tradition, whether we want it or do not want it. It is a question of the indwelling spirit. I personally do not want anything old or new. I want what is "true". Somebody asked me how many varieties of art are there. I said that according to me, there are only two varieties, the good and the bad. That is all there is. But, of course, there are infinite varieties of expression. Kerala has its unique expression, so has every part of the world. I have been in Africa and I have seen how Africans express their sense of truth in

beauty and rhythm, in their own way. It is only this truth that matters and truth in the sense of what expresses the highest and the truest is most lasting. People often talk of old art and new art. I myself do not understand this. We can give a historical date to a piece of art, but art itself can only be something that has no reference to time because it is eternal. And because it is eternal, it will always be new. If can never by anything but new, and this we have to realise in every possible way. We have to remember that the whole spirit of art is not dependant upon the superficiality of our conception of art.

Today, we are in the era of mass production. We may have in India, committees for artistic development but the depth is lacking and we have to remember that a true artist in the highest sense expresses that real freedom which India has not yet achieved. We have achieved political freedom. We have been through many troubles and sorrows and difficulties which a country has to go through. Sorrows bring their own knowledge, their own experience, their own maturity. There is perhaps through them this possibility of thinking anew and beginning a new life. But at the same time, we have to remember that real freedom is the freedom of what is within each one. If I am allowed to say what I wish, then I am free, so we think. But what is it that I wish to say? This is the question. Is my wish a superficial one or does it go deep? If I were truly cultured, it would be an urge from deep within, thrusting itself through me. This is what art does. Art is diversified in many many forms. When I took up dance, for example, I felt it was a tremendous expression of the real soul of our country and it made me glad that the soul had its freedom to express itself through me.

Art has its many forms, but it is an expression of the one culture and therefore, the different forms of art are important because they show the aspiration of the people. We are inspired by this upsurge and that upsurge has its sanctifying effect upon our emotions, has its effect upon our minds and therefore upon our souls also. Every form of art has come through the urge that is within us. We cannot have a democracy in art. Twenty people deciding by a majority vote that a thing is beautiful is not to be thought of. It is not a question of the majority at all. Are all the members of the majority sensitive? Are they all like Nataraja, who has the

sixth sense, who is a yogi or a great teacher who can truly say what is beautiful from the absolute point of view. No, only the creative artist can judge the validity of his work.

We have to discover, we have to find, we have to appreciate if we wish to know. We should not necessarily aspire to express or to be great artists. We should wish to appreciate. In my opinion, if we appreciate art and understand it well, we are automatically artists ourselves. In my opinion, every human being is fundamentally an artist, because the spirit of art is in him and therefore, it is of great importance to understand the value of art and culture and to learn its ultimate meaning. Appreciation of art has its impact upon human nature and character. Perhaps, you think that I am talking high-flown language, but I can only talk of what I have experienced, and what has been a tremendous inspiration in my own life. What I talk of is from my experience and to me, music, dance, great creations of poetry and great paintings are like prayer. It is as if you see with your eyes what you would not see in your ordinary condition of consciousness. Once Dr.Besant expressed this idea in a sentence which I will repeat, because, I feel exactly the same way. She said, "Religion is your true self, turned inwards". You turn inwards towards the Highest by meditation, by prayer and worship, by any means that you like according to your temperament. Let us take the turning inwards. If I mediate, to a person external to me, it is not known what is the substance of my meditation. He cannot know what state of consciousness I achieve. This is my private and personal experience which is closed to him who is external to me. But anybody can see the personal experience of the artist when he has created a great sculpture, a great painting, a great piece of music, a wonderful poem and so on. When you hear the music of Tyagaraja, for example, when it is beautifully sung, we can contact what he felt. When we have contacted his prayer, we know the content of his prayer. We know his conversation with Sri Rama. Therefore, the artist is able to convey in his work, something of his true self. He has given to the world something of beauty and through the work of art, we really do come into contact with his great experience. This is why I believe that art is a great spiritual expression and this spiritual expression must find itself exhibited in every aspect of life.

Do not think that art or culture is meant for the stage or for exhibition alone. For me, art is life. It means beautiful homes, making the home beautiful, artistic. It is an expression of the culture of the country. Our Indian homes used to be very beautiful mainly because of their simplicity, mainly because of the aesthetic sense of the people who inhabited these homes and because of all the circumstances which went with that sensitivity. Now, we borrow western things. It always happens when we borrow something which has not been created by our way of thinking, we usually are unaware of their depth. We can swim in our own river because we know where we are. If, however, you go to swim in strange rivers, we are out of depth. It is the same experience when we borrow from others. We do not know where we are. When we adopt something which is not a part of ourselves, what happens is that we do not have the same good taste with regard to it as we have for our own things.

We are very busy in expressing ourselves in all kinds of unimportant things and we forget that which is the most important, that which truly builds the nation, namely, Culture. This is what builds the nation, it is that which brings people together, it is that which brings unity. Therefore, it is the true foundation stone on which the structure of national life is to be built. This will be the unshakable basis for the greatness of our country. So we have to know and understand our culture from the spiritual view-point, from what we call the emotional appeal that art brings to each one of us. We see so much of our true art, still existing, as for example, in Kathakali, depicting the great stories of our epics. All these, our forefathers were able to convey through art. Our people never found themselves tired of listening to or seeing these things. They never became tired of seeing them enacted through the vehicle of beauty. We have become or are becoming a talking nation. We go to lectures, but, while we can see a performance of Kathakali from six o' clock in the evening to six o' clock in the morning, we certainly cannot listen to a lecture for the same period of time. This will be impossible. Such is the magic of art.

That is why art is a very great vehicle for the message of culture. Art is not propagandist, it is not meant to convey partisan or political ideas or ideas of social reform. It stands by itself. Its message is the message of beauty and the message of

beauty is to the soul and causes its refinement. Take this land of Kerala. How many great people, great singers, great dancers have created a unified culture - a culture which in its spirit is common to all India. We may know the names of only those artists who have became well-known in our time, but there have been others who have not been famous at all, who played no less a part in the building up of the country. If we think of Tamil Nadu, it is the same. It is the same with every part of our country. Everywhere, there have been these great ones who have been inspired by their devotion, devoting themselves to the giving of this great message, so that, individually, we can grow into greatness and we can, by that individual upliftment, create a collective greatness in the nation.

India was known to have been the greatest among the countries of the past. We should not understand thereby that there have been no faults in the country. Of course, there were many faults. Also, from time to time, ideas have changed; even ideas of right and wrong have changed. But the fundamental spirit which impelled us was the same. I feel that the fundamental spirit is still there. Often we can contact it. India can still rise to greatness and give the message for which the world is waiting. I would like to see before I die, the flowering of that lost beauty in perhaps a new form. I would like to see the love of our culture, growing because of knowledge. I would like to see the translation of all that this implies into the fine points of daily life. I would like to see that high standards of thought, and living are demanded because without high standards, without sensitive critical judgement, greatness in artistic creation is not possible. We want once again to enable great art, true art, to create a great civilisation. We do not know which comes first, but a civilisation, if it rises to great heights, automatically, expresses itself in a thousand different ways and that is what I look for in our education. I want our younger generation to be steeped in the great artistic revival of India. The danger is that even artists are becoming some times political-minded, commercial minded. I believe that great people are born from time to time to uplift the world and surely they will come back to lift up our country.

- Lecture at Vallathol Memorial Hall, Kerala University 21.03.1972

Vallathol Memorial Lectures

Lecture No.2

Yesterday, I spoke about the essential principles of culture in general and of Indian culture in particular. I spoke of what are the essential features of our background. Today, I will continue the trend which I set in my previous lecture and also give a somewhat more elaborate idea of the Indian concept of art.

This, of course, is a specialised subject which cannot be understood by the majority of people, except as a theory. In all art, whether it is dance, music, drama or any other form, there are the twin ideas of *Lakshana*, and *Lakshya*. *Lakshya* is when there is an instinctive understanding in the appreciation and an instinctive ability to express oneself through a particular expression of art, but this does not imply a knowledge of its structure, of its grammar and of its idiom.

Lakshana is a detailed knowledge of the structure and the grammar of art. A vast majority of people who are interested in art have only a *lakshya* appreciation of it, due to the general aesthetic appreciation which come to them through an inborn sense or through constant contact. This sense gives them an idea of what is good and what is bad without their being able to explain why that something is good or why it is bad. One's judgement of what is good or bad depends upon one's reaction to it in terms of pleasure. But, when we say that something is good, it may be that some one else may think it is bad, because to him it is not pleasant. However, if a person has good judgement, he will be in a position to judge that essential quality. He may not like a particular piece of art, but he will still be able to discern the true artistic quality in it. There may be several great musicians and I may like the music which some of them create, while I do not enjoy so much the singing of

some others. But, if I am sensitive to music, I will be able to say that they are all good musicians - whether I like them or not. My liking depends upon my particular make-up. But, my judgement depends upon my knowledge, my experience and my impersonality. I would acknowledge all of them to be fine musicians, but I would say I like the music of some particular person more than that of others. But the last word as to what is good and that is bad art is with the artist himself. Of course, by experience, by continued observation, and by the understanding that comes out of it, we can gradually get an insight. Take for example, an archaeologist - an iconographer. He is able, through years of study, through vast experience, to make correct judgements as to the age of a particular piece of sculpture. He will be able to elaborate on its special features from the aesthetic point of view. He would instinctively reject imitations. This he is able to do because he steeps himself in knowledge and he has been steeped in it for so long that he becomes sensitive to what is true and what is untrue in that particular branch of knowledge. When one steeps himself in his own particular branch of knowledge, in one particular type of expression, he begins to feel what is true and what is untrue instinctively. It is like dealing with animals. People who are in constant contact with animals, who are working with them the whole time, begin to have an instinctive understanding of how animals feel and are likely to react. To many people, a herd of cows is a herd of cows. One cow is much like another, but to the man who has been dealing with them, each cow is a separate individual with its own individual character, its special way of response and so on. Such people, knowing instinctively what the animal wants, are able to supply its needs effectively. In the same way, through great study and by familiarity with art, through constant contact, we become sensitive to the feeling of the art, the feeling of culture and we begin to know what is true culture and what is not.

In India, at present, there has been a very sudden increase of what is called "interest" in art. Because of this, there is a great demand for performances, for what are strangely enough called "cultural programmes". Unfortunately, interest does not mean true appreciation and there is not always what I might call a discrimination that is necessary to know true art. Many people pass faulty judgements on the artists who perform, without knowing what they are really seeing.

And if I may respectfully say so, some of the errors in this respect are made by those who are called "art critics", who write in newspapers and in journals. Unfortunately, they have the power of the pen. Whatever they write is considered by many as sacrosanct, and because of the vast audience for whom they write, they can make and unmake artists. In reality, it is rarely that they do know something about true art. They have no discrimination, their judgements are often dictated by personal considerations and, actually, very few know something of the technique. But they learn certain words, they begin to command a terminology though they do not possess a sense of the art. There may be exceptions to what I say, especially in the realm of music, because, fortunately, even today, there is a true appreciation of good music in our country. Indians are a highly musical race and music has come down in an unbroken tradition. In all the other arts, however, discriminative knowledge is sadly lacking.

This is what we require most in India, true critical acumen and judgement. The critic should create the artist, because he will not be satisfied with anything except the best. The artist has to create the critic by making him live in the atmosphere of true art and thus to develop an instinct for true art. We need good taste, in order to be able to enter into the spirit of culture, into the spirit of art and to be able, thereby, to go behind the form. When we see a form, we not only see what is the exterior but we have also to see what is behind it. What produces it, what is it the expression of? If we do not have this capacity, we will never get to know whether what we see is good art or bad. Let us take a simple example. Take the great painter like Leonardo da Vinci who painted truly great pictures. All his pictures have been reproduced by others so that in the world today, there are innumerable imitations of many of his paintings, such as the Mona Lisa. Some of these imitations are technically perfect, but a true expert is able to sense that which is the imitation and that which is the original. These imitations often deceive all except the greatest experts. The expert makes his judgement and separates the good from the bad. He does this depending on that indescribable something which is called 'atmosphere'. This is very apparent to a great expert, while to the ordinary man, it is not apparent at all. This ability comes out of developing the sensitivity through knowledge and through constant contact and experience.

It is the same with regard to music. In these days many Western people wish to learn Indian music. There are many of them who actually have learnt Indian music. Indians also learn Indian music. The greater the music, the more it enshrines subtleties which an average person is even unable to hear, because his ears are not attuned to them, but the more one hears the more one begins to hear, if you know what I mean. There are layers upon layers of beauty and when one begins to be sensitive, then one is sensitive to the top most layer. As one becomes more and more attuned to this, one seems to hear the echo of something in that and one becomes slowly inducted into the second layer and so on and on without end. That is why, Indian music can be learnt only by the ear. I know what great demand there is for some kind of notation in which Indian music can be written but this can become useful only when we have learnt what is implied by the notation, what it suggests. We cannot learn from the notation. After we have learnt, for record purposes or for the purposes of understanding, we can have the music recorded in some kind of notation. The musician can profit by it because he will know what is intended to be conveyed, not exactly what is written, because, the subtleties can never be written and recorded that way. It is the same with life. There are so many subtleties of culture which cannot be put into words as I explained to you yesterday. If they cannot be put into words, they cannot be explained, because no explanation is good enough to express the fine points. This is what we do not usually understand.

In the classic treatises on Indian aesthetics, when the art of dance or music are dealt with, the world *abhinaya* and the word *bhava* are often used to convey a very important idea. For example, when one portrays human emotions in different characters, in order to represent these characters, they have to be dramatised. This can be done only if one knows the character and lives the character. The person who is represented on the stage must become real to us. Here, in Kerala, all of you are familiar with Kathakali. There is no art anywhere in the world that has more expression or *bhava* than Kathakali. Its speciality is its *abhinaya*, the technique of *abhinaya* expressing the *bhava*. In fact, I used to think that in Kathakali, there is no footwork, there is no technique other than the expression of emotion. This was because there was so much make-up, so much costume, which hides of the leg movements. Later on, having become intimately associated with the art, I came to

realise what an amount of footwork there is in it but more than three-fourths of the foot-work is hidden. The expression of the *bhava* on the other hand, is not hidden. It is fully there and each character expresses a basic emotion of that character and its variations as an actor interprets it. Bhima goes into the *Kadalivanam* in search of the *Saugandhikam*. On his way, he destroys the trees in the forest in order to make a pathway for himself. Wild animals, seeing him, run away and hide. He overcomes every obstacle in order to achieve his purpose. In this particular portion of the *Kalyana Saugandhikan*, we see Bhima expressing many different emotions. There is what one might call a permanent emotion which is called the *Sthayi bhava*. In this case it would be the *Sthayi bhava* of the *Vira Rasam* which would be the permanent aspect of Bhima's character, but in his acting in what is called the *Sanchari*, every subsidiary emotion, known as *Vyabhichari bhavas* are also shown. In this expression of the *rasa*, the audience, if it is a cultured audience, participates and the aesthetic mood is fully shared between the actor and the audience and the purpose of the art is thereby achieved. The audience apprehends this by the sixth sense and they would say "how subtle, how wonderful the actor is" who portrays the character in every single detail of the emotions. The actor is able to do this because he enters the spirit of that particular character and portrays it through the technique which he has mastered. It must be remembered that in all this, there is freedom, because, art, while it has its rules, is a creative thing and cannot be entirely confined to rules. That is why the actor, when he is a great actor, is a human being, who, in this life is a trying to be a God. God is the creator of the world, the creator of all nature and all that exists upon this earth. But we are also, in a small way, Gods. As for example, on the stage when a great actor is creating something which comes welling up from within him. A character is created through art in a smaller measure, as the Universe comes into being out of the creator's consciousness. Indeed, this creative spirit is the greatest thing of all, and is the source that produces art. Only through this creativeness have we to interpret all that is conveyed through art. Because of this, there is a change according to the personal medium of the actor which gives a new interpretation to the same theme. For example, another artist, who portrays the same character, while keeping to the *Vira Rasa* of Bhima, may interpret him in a different way, according to his own

personal medium, his temperament, his training and so on. The fundamental character has not changed, but new subtelities, new variations, are given by each person who portrays the character. So, we see, how much variety there is in one single manifestation of art. If all these are really to be understood, I again say, we have to develop that sensitivity through the experience of art, so that our minds, the eyes and ears, achieve a *Samskara*, a purification by which we see and hear and the principle behind the portrayal.

Unfortunately, we have no patience in these matters. We do not want to work hard enough, in order to achieve the right result. If a man wants to be a doctor, he is willing to spend years, in a medical college and afterwards, by working in the hospitals, firstly to secure his degree and then, to practice medicine. He does not think such time is lost. It is the same with a lawyer. Years are spent before experience is achieved and nobody grudges it. Unfortunately, when it comes to art, many people think, that knowledge can be acquired and used on the stage very quickly indeed! This is very bad. I am one of those who suffers from this particular manifestation of our blindness. Many parents, want me to make their daughter - mostly daughters, not sons- great artists in the course of a year or two. I cannot make them into artists, I can only teach what I know. They have to make themselves into artists. I am relating the absurdities which I encounter. Sometimes, a parent has a daughter who is waiting either to go to College or to get married. In the interval of these few months, he wants her to learn dance. Or they say, "my child is not good at anything else, therefore, let her learn art". Nobody is going to learn art, unless he or she is talented, has an inborn attitude and is prepared to work very hard. Working very hard is most important. Today, the impulse is to work towards a diploma and not towards perfection. If a student gets a degree or a diploma in dance, he or she feels that the aim has been achieved. They are not bothered to find out if they have become true artists. Let me emphasize again this tragedy. It is a most disgraceful service that is paid to art. Art is the greatest flower of our culture. This art, which has been developing into something great, something noble and subtle through many centuries of expression, this, we want to debase by learning for a very short time and then performing it on the stage. If we have the proper attitude to it and are prepared to take the trouble, what can we not

do? We can change our country, we can change the entire civilisation we can change human nature. We can cleanse our mentality. We can give the message of the great philosophies of our civilisation through the language of art. It is terrible to contemplate that such a great art is sought to be learnt in two years, or even less! If I am not prepared to teach a student in two years, there is somebody else who is ready to do so. We are inclined to think that it is easy to make a person into a great artist and that it does not involve any participation by the pupil, nor is a period put to the time of learning. We do not understand that in order to know culture, in order to practise art, we need maturity without which nothing is possible.

Culture is experience, the experience of life. I often see, so often, Bharata Natya being performed after having been learnt in a few months. I cannot describe the painful sights that one sees very tiny little girls being put on the stage to perform and they try to portray the arrows of *Kama* and such things without having the shadow of an idea of what they are trying to portray, an emotion of which they have no personal experience whatever. It is absolutely ridiculous that children should be made to go through all this. This is what is called *play-acting* and it has nothing to do with *acting*. You will pardon me if I say this kind of *play-acting* is not confined to children, but is common even among adults. The reason why this happens, especially nowadays and why so many artists become popular without deserving popularity, is because so many audiences are as immature as the artists, if not more immature than them. This is real stupidity and it is sad to see this kind of propagation of Indian art. This happens because we are prone to make performances glamorous. To us, glamour is more important than the art which it is meant to enshrine.

As far as true Indian art is concerned, a few factors are most important. Of course, the first quality to take into consideration is the quality of reverence without which there is no Indian art at all. It is through the quality of reverence that art in India has achieved a spiritual quality. Indian art is spiritual in nature, and the quality of reverence is an essential feature of it. Even today, many artists will not come on the stage without a prayer. In Kerala, you all know how the Kathakali dancer does his *Purvangam* behind the *Tiraseela* and how much trouble he takes

over this act of worship. In order to understand this, we have to see that he is not dancing to the audience alone, but he is, in fact, dedicating himself.

In the *Natya Sastra* of Bharata, rules are laid down as to how a dancer should first appear on the stage, what are the things that a dancer should do in order to dedicate herself or himself. With regard to the musician it is just same. Please remember in all these arts the quality of reverence is so greatly emphasized that the artist in virtue of his being an artist, is able to perceive greatness, wherever it may be and in whatever form it is. When I was in Pakistan some years ago, there was, living in Karachi a great musician called, Bindu Khan. He was a great Sarangi Player. I knew most of these musicians. He was very happy to see me. When he was tuning his instrument, he was privately singing a small verse in praise of Sri Krishna. Of course, in Pakistan, a *sloka* on Sri Krishna is not allowed, therefore, he was singing it within himself. He said to me, I have always worshiped Krishna. He is a great dancer, and songs on him are sung by all without differences of religion, because he belongs to all religions and to all men. Bindu Khan's reverence was so great, that he could not come on the stage without uttering that prayer.

This taught me a lesson and I began to understand how art removes all differences, all barriers of nation or religion. Whenever and wherever we see beauty, we worship the source from which it comes. We appreciate the source and that is why I feel that the great contribution that India has made towards art is this basic quality of reverence. As I said yesterday, religion has played a great part in art not only in India but all over the world. The great Renaissance of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in Italy is a case in point. It produced the wonderful paintings of Fra Angalico, of Lenoardo da Vinci and others. The inspiration for most of these great painters was the life of the Christ. They painted Madonnas, many varieties of Madonnas. While we do not know how the Madonna looked, each one of these representations is beautiful and each one is inspired with Her spirit. Each one of these artists has interpreted Her through that spirit which incarnated in Her. The spirit is the same, but the form is different.

In the same way, we find beauty in architecture, whether it is in a cathedral or in a mosque or in a temple. In all these cases, high aspiration and inspiration

produced forms of beauty, crystallising great ideas into tangible forms. India has made a speciality of this attitude and that is why we find so many works of art which are filled with a spiritual outlook. All the objects that the archaeologists are seeking and classifying are notable for this outlook. Of course, one may say, can we not produce something new with the same spirit. Of course, we can, not necessarily because we are Hindu, Muslim or Christian, but because we have reverence. It dos not matter towards whom that reverence is directed, If our emotions and our intellect can reach that high level of consciousness and contact that eternal beauty, then there arises the ability in us to create. The painter paints a tree. The tree represents no religion, but we have only to look at it to sense the spiritual feeling as in any religious subject. This emphasis upon reverence is something we cannot get away from, whatever be the form of art in which it expresses itself. It is so evident in music. Where are these great musicians, those great masters who used to be with us. Today we may have the same form but we do not have that particular quality. The songs of Tyagaraja, Dikshitar, Syama Sastri and Swati Tirunal have come down to us. But if they are not sung with the same feeling that the composers of these songs had in their soul, then the singing becomes mechanical. It is not merely the form that we want, but also the soul of the composer. That is why, *bhava*, expression, is a very important concept in art. *Bhava* must be there in order to express that particular reality, which is the background of everything and which is the soul of our culture.

This is the important thing about art and it is an important aspect of culture, especially Indian Culture. This is why in our ancient *Sastras*, they gave a high place to art. Art found its place in the temple. I went to see your great temple today and I saw how every little piece of cloth that had been used, the frescoes on the walls, the carvings on the door, the flowers used for decoration every single thing used in the temple was beautiful. Of course, it is true that now-a-days, we are beginning to see in the temple ugly things also, things that do not belong to that particular spirit.

Another very important aspect of our Indian art is simplicity and humility. We may call it impersonality if we like. Today, when a painter paints a picture, he

wants to be sure that his name is put in the right place, so everybody can say, he was the painter. But those who created the greatest works of art in the past-which we now put in our museum-nobody knows who they were and they themselves never bothered about being known. They were only interested in seeing that what they created was beautiful and they forgot to sign their names to their works. Even if they did, we do not know who they really were. We are certain that Kalidasa was not the true name of the great poet. He himself did not bother to leave the details of his life and of his family background. We know all about the famous temple of the Parathenon in Greece. We know who built it. We know all these because, historical facts have been recorded though the works have not been signed. But in India especially, there was that spirit of humility, that spirit of impersonality, that made art more important than the artist. The artist forgot himself in his art.

This is our Indian outlook. I am not going to say which is better or which is worse. We see this difference in the expressions of art which we witness today. There are many images of the Buddha all over the country. But, what is important is that we have produced *Buddhahood* in these images. They are not personal representation of any particular person but are the interpretations of the archetype. We know how the particular spirit is conveyed by a certain image as in the case of the Buddha, the spirit of tranquility, of peace, of compassion and of meditation. In India, the artist never took a living model to make an image. They may have had a certain impression of posture and so on; but there was never the personal representation as in the case of the West. In the West, every great artist is seeking and choosing somebody, who, according to him, is an ideal model to represent, for example, the Christ and has made his statue form that particular model. In India, however, there has been that impersonality and simplicity of outlook which is a very high and wonderful aspect of our art. It is the concept, the idea, that has been made into the image. This may not be always true in modern India. Nowadays, people seem to think that what matters is not whether art is good or bad, but whether it is something done by an artist who has made a name for himself. Is the artist well known or not? - this is the important thing. Therefore, it is publicity, and the type of attitude that goes with it that has invaded us and this is completely unnatural to the genius of our country.

Therefore, our art has deteriorated in many ways. Competition, publicity, commercialism, glamour-these have eroded the general Indian outlook. Now, perhaps sub-consciously, we want to copy the things of Hollywood. Even, our music which at one time was the purest and most abstract that the world has ever known, shows signs of becoming tainted. At one time, we had classical music, folk music, religious music and so on. But now, we have accepted another category, called *Cinema music*. It does not belong to any of our natural categories nor does it have a particular character. This type of mentality has produced all over India a general superficiality of outlook which may be termed immature. If we want maturity, then we must start right from the beginning. But we do not have respect for art to start with, because today, everybody is quite accustomed to the idea that we should all learn to be artists whether we have the attitude or not, whether we are willing to work hard at it or not. I do not know how much reverence there is for art today, how much respect.

Unfortunately, we see this kind of thing all over India, whether it be in the villages or in the cities. We have in India a rich variety of expression in the art - such varieties as have existed in no other country. All these had that same unity of background, of that spirit and they all had the general atmosphere which elevates. I do not mean that our dance or music is always about spiritual things. Please remember that according to the Indian conception, religion and spirituality form the background of everything. We had beautiful folk music which was meant for the ordinary individual and which was sung on all kinds of secular occasion. This was not spiritual music, but had that inexpressible something which united it in spirit with the great hymns sung by Tyagaraja and other great composers. It is something wonderful to see on our traditional stage, in all kinds of different presentations according to the locality, varieties of human emotions and experience all united by the one spirit. Sri Rama feels as we do. So does Sri Krishna. Sita, who is the ideal of the perfect women feels sorrow and devotion to her husband as Indian women do. We are, each one of us, represented in the great epics though we are neither Sri Rama, Sri Krishna, Sita or any one else.

In this, we are different from other nations, and races, because we have a

different quality, a different approach to life. These great figures of our epics do the same thing we do. They lived like us, acted like us, moved with people like us but with a different eminence and greatness. They were human in their approach. Therefore, we learn this great lesson that to be human, to be natural, to be simple, to do things that a human being would normally do - all these are perfectly natural and beautiful. If we understand it in the right way, and that is why it is very difficult to define, this is aesthetically complete. We will be able to see that a person is great because we can recognise the quality of greatness. But, please remember that greatness is different from perfection. And so long as one is in a human body, we cannot expect perfection but we can expect greatness. The fundamental emotion must be great. There are the essential qualities of integrity, of truth, of compassion. However, in the process of expressing these qualities, there may be many faults. Who is without faults? But, does it make a great person any the less great, because there are these faults? It is the aspiration of the individual that counts. Though one cannot judge perfection, we can have an ideal of perfection. I have, at least I think I have, an idea of what is perfection, but if you ask me who is perfect, I cannot tell you, nor am I interested. I do not look for it. But, I want truth, I want the expression of greatness, I want inspiration, I want something which elevates us.

We must attune ourselves to the *sruti*, as they say in music, of culture. We probably do not pay enough attention to *sruti* in South India. The great musicians of the North, the great *ustads*, sit with the *tambura*, just listening and attuning themselves to the *sruti* and when they become one with the *sruti*, they enter into the mood of music. Then their music, when they come on the stage, is beautiful and great, because they have attuned themselves to the mood of music, to the exclusion of everything else. So must we be, when we create something. We must exclude everything else from our consciousness and must attune ourselves to the spirit of creation. This is so in all professions. Take the case of a doctor who, after a great deal of specialisation, becomes so sensitive that his diagnosis is as much a matter of instinct as of the detailed examination which he no doubt makes. The examination only corroborates what he instinctively feels about the patient.

In the same way, we have to plunge ourselves into the atmosphere of our country, into its background. For this also, knowledge is necessary. I have already spoken about *Lakshyam* and *Lakshanam*. *Lakshyam* is the instinctive knowledge and sensitiveness, but *Lakshyam* is also necessary. In order to give full expression to the creative spirit inside, one has to know the idiom of the art thoroughly. This was not always the case with the dancers in the past. Many of them that I knew were, no doubt, excellent dancers, but they did not even know what the *hastas* meant. But they were able to give the feeling of the art, because they had that spirit of beauty. However, when dancers begin to learn what the technique means, the technique through which art is expressed, art becomes full of meaning which they can convey to the audience. It is to be remembered that art is not only that which the artist conveys to the audience, but is also that in which he is immersed, that in which he lives. That is why environment is such an important thing. If we want art education, which I think, we should have in every school, college and university, environment is the first thing that we should think about, because, when it comes to beauty, we imbibe it subconsciously, from the environment. If we live amongst trees in the groves, these trees will have great effect upon us, but we do not know that they are producing that effect. Nature becomes part of environment and gives us a particular outlook. A person who has been brought up in an *ashrama* has a different feeling about him than the person who has been brought up in a city. This makes us understand, how environment is tremendously important. Therefore, it we are to produce great Indian art, we must gradually enter into the spirit of our culture and our art. This should be possible by our creating the right environment for Indian culture and Indian art. This environment is equally important if we want to create the right type of citizen, who can appreciate the aesthetic sense of India and its culture that I have been talking about.

When I was in Hungary, a year or so ago, they told me how they have a system by which every child, every single individual in the nation, must learn to appreciate music. Music appreciation is a very important part of their education and it has a very great place in their educational programme. In India, I must confess I do not know the conditions in Kerala, but certainly in Madras and elsewhere, they think only girls need to learn music. I cannot understand why.

Does it mean that only girls need to be cultured? I do not know, for I think it is necessary for all human beings to be cultured. This particular attitude arises from the fact that we think of art as a possession which a girl must have like a jewel, like clothes. Then art does not enter into their fundamental selves. "Let them have some music, and let them have some dance, before they get married". This is the general feeling. With such an attitude, there cannot be real art. People who think this way do not even understand the meaning of art.

It is very important to the life of the people, to have it enriched by art. It enriches their lives, because it will make the lives of men happy. Many may say that they had no background of art and that they have not missed it. Naturally, they cannot miss what they have not had, at least, not consciously. This atmosphere of beauty has nothing to do with money or the possession of money. Beauty can flower in the lives of men, in every stratum of society. We need beauty in the buildings, in all the work that we do. In education, it is most necessary if we are going to develop our country. If we want to make it much greater culturally than it is today, then we must pay attention to this. Today, what we are proud of in our country is mostly what has belonged to the past. We must become proud of what we have in the present and we have to become proud of a new nation which is as great as it was in the past if not even greater and our progress must be such that we do not deteriorate but advance into new fields.

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The True Spirit of Art

According to my conception, the true spirit of Art comes not from a knowledge of Art alone but from a knowledge of Truth and from possessing the true religious spirit. I say this because the source of all knowledge and inspiration is one. It does not matter whether by religion we mean a faith, a philosophy, a system of ethics, as long as we agree that the religious spirit is primarily a spirit of dedication. The true spirit of Art is something which can be contacted only by those who have this dedicated spirit. Art is a sense of aspiration, a reaching out. Some may think that Art is Beauty and, being concerned with the expression of Beauty in a material world, is a matter of form before anything else. According to me, Beauty is form as well as inspiration, because the spirit of the beautiful which comes down to expression is the spirit of inspiration. Many have said that Art is religion. This should not be taken to mean that Art is another kind of a Religion but it certainly is the essence of religion, - the same inspiration is behind it.

In the world today, people talk much about understanding the value of Beauty and Art without knowing fully what it means. Most people really do not know what Art is. They have, of course, a theoretical idea about the place of Art in national life. They give it a high place in the national consciousness. Our present Government, for example, has the avowed intention of encouraging all kinds of folk Art, folk dancing, etc. But the conception most people have of Art is very superficial because it is mostly based on book knowledge. At the same time, while calling something very superficial by the name of Art, they are prepared to do anything for it. In reality, such an attitude is similar to that of a man who says, "I am a learned man because I have read many books and know them all by heart".

But it is the identification with the spirit of knowledge that is contained in books that make a man learned, not the mere committing of words to memory.

It is the same with Art. Many say they are artists but only a few are. It is aspiration, it is that inner conception of the true spirit of Art which is and the most important force in the human individual, that makes the artist. Take a great musician like Tiger Varadachariar. Those who have listened to him will say, "He could sing a magnificent number of Ragas". Others will acknowledge and admire his marvellous repertoire of Kshetragna Padams and of Tyagaraja Kritis. All this is quite true; but suppose Tiger had forgotten them all or had never known them. Then the general opinion would have been that he was quite a nice man but that he did not know much. The usual conception or judgment on such matters is founded on the extent of an artist's knowledge and not on the feeling one gets of his contact with reality. As a matter of fact, it is this feeling of contact that is important. A very great individual, a great personality, gives one the feeling that he is in touch with something real. Such a person can even make mistakes which lesser personalities can ill afford to make. Tiger could make mistakes in *Tala* which in his disciples would mean only insufficient training. A very great poet may sometimes write verse which sounds appallingly like nonsense. In a lesser writer, such a poem would really mean nonsense because he depends for effect upon form, - words, correctness, etc. In a great poet, whatever be the mistakes in form, he still gives the impression of a contact with reality.

Ordinary people do not know how to judge artists. With all the present day craze for dance and music, we see how judgments and criticism are superficial. If a dancer is fair, the dance is good. If, in addition, she wears many jewels, the dance is still better. The same levels of judgment obtain also in the case of music and musicians. In the West, on the whole, the general level of Art appreciation is better. Because of this, over there, they have a certain understanding of genius and know how to forgive a genius his peculiarities. They will say, "Well, anyhow, he has something in him".

For a singer ordinarily, mostly so in the West, the voice is a most important factor. Of course, the voice is an important factor in India too. But such a pre-

occupation with the voice of the singer can, in some cases, lead to a position where the voice becomes more important than the music. It is very hard to put up with a harsh voice. But there may be a musical element in a singer who has a harsh voice which may be beautiful and well worth while to contact. The music is in the soul of the singer and it expresses itself in beauty, whether or not the voice does it full credit. This is because the spirit of Art - the creative spirit - is a very remarkable thing. This spirit is independent of form in one sense; in the sense that, often, it expresses itself even in imperfect form, as in the case of the poet who may write good poetry which, from a formal point of view, may contain many mistakes. Art as we know it is at the same time dependent on, as well as independent of, form. In one sense, if Art is invisible, there is no Art at all. It has to be visible and so is bound to form. How can human beings know music without sound? If a great musician were to say, "I have taken a vow of silence for the rest of my life. In future, silence will express my music", it would be strange, even amusing.

Expressed Art depends on form whether in sculpture, architecture or painting. Beautiful words are necessary in poetry to express noble ideas. Art, while it expresses itself in form, transcends form. The method of expressing oneself in the chosen form of a particular Art is called its technique. The rules have to be learnt, but when they are learnt thoroughly they can be broken. Younger artists often like to break the rules, but really to be able to do so one must be a genius. What is genius? Of course, from the Hindu point of view, genius is something that develops through a number of incarnations. Genius is creativeness of the soul. Who is a creative person and what is creative Art? Creative Art is something that is eternally new, eternally different. A recognition that it is something ever fresh and new, leads to the misconception that it means variety. Mere variety does not mean creative Art, though many will say where there is variety there is creativeness. A creative artist can go on doing the same thing and yet it will never be the same. Each time, the creative impulse gives to the same form a fresh, newly born atmosphere. Creative Art has variety but it does not need to have it. It can be something that is repeated over and over again and is yet ever fresh. It would sound like a paradox to say that even in repeating, the one thing that a creative artist cannot do, is to repeat himself. A person who believes in variety, consciously promotes variety while an artist is

concerned only with his creative spirit. In the creation of variety as such, there may be inventiveness, there may be talent. But talent is not genius.

In these days we are prone to mix up words and the facts behind the words. We think that talent is genius when it is not. A person can be very talented and still not be a genius. When artists have genius it becomes clear that all creative Arts belong to one spirit. That spirit becomes evident and expressed when an individual is able to contact the reality of an experience through a mind which is under the stress of a deep emotion. To be an artist, mind and emotion have both to be developed. The intellect, as ordinarily understood, is not necessarily needed for Art. I have myself seen this in the case of children who do not like books but are interested in, and can express themselves in, Art. Our ideas are very limited. We do not really know what intelligence is. Often we think that when we do not understand a person, she or he must be intelligent. When I was very young, sometimes I used to attend lectures delivered in English and I thought these lectures were marvellous because I did not understand one word!. Now, the same thing happens to most of us in mature life. We are apt to be impressed by a thing just because we do not understand it. Intelligence really means a capacity for the perception of truth, of reality. In genius this very clear perception of the mind combines with a deep emotion which stirs the soul of him who contacts it. This emotion is not confined to one particular stimulus but is something which makes one sensitive to all experience, which makes one feel for everything.

In society, people often make a special effort to appear cultured in conversation. This is mostly so in the West where, in society, people have to have something to talk about. "What a lovely scene!" they say; "Have you read the latest book of such and such an author?"; Oh!, you are from India. It must be a very interesting country", and so on. When I go to New Delhi I hear men and women talk in the same way. This is a reflection in India of the superficial side of Western civilisation. This has nothing to do with real culture which primarily is a keen perception, in which there is deep emotion,- a deep emotion tremendously responsive and making one expand. Beauty and Art make one feel as if a comb is drawn through the tangle of our being and fresh air is let in. This happens when one sees

a beautiful thing, when one feels very much for a child or an animal. We are breathing deep, spiritually, when we feel a great emotion. This stirring up is tremendously important and this is one of the reasons why Art is important. Unless we know how to comb out our being so that we are ever fresh and revived, we cannot respond and we cannot help people. The intellect by itself is cold and unresponsive like steel. But when beautiful emotion is mixed with intellect we are able to contact something which is deep and marvellous. The actual emotion of contact is something one cannot convey to others. Ask a great musician wherein lies the secret of his inspiration and he will reply he does not know. At the same time there has to be something within us to respond. We cannot really hear the Kalyani Raga and all its subtleties unless there is a deeply responsive element within us. That part of us which hears, sees and responds has to be prepared for the reception of Art.

A very important thing in life is the stimulus of being with someone who knows a great deal about these subjects. Slowly one begins to feel and know also. This has been a part of my own experience. I have often been in contact with remarkable people who were specialists along lines which were not mine - Sir C.V.Raman, for example. It is so marvellous when he speaks about the diamond, and his inspiration has made me feel that the diamond is indeed something wonderful. I have felt the beauty of the diamond all the more. When one hears him, one wants to go in for scientific research also. One wants to be a great scientist like him. His ability to bring such an inspiration to the subject of his research makes one feel that he is also an artist. The stimulus of greatness is tremendously important. Many say they will and can study for themselves. This is a mistake. The presence of greatness in the Guru, the teacher, makes one contact the reality in the subject of study. When someone has made a deep study of certain books, those who come into contact with him also begin to feel the greatness of knowledge. Sometimes I have heard recitations from Shakespeare which have laid open to me the soul of the poet and made me wish I could recite as beautifully as some of these artists. When one has such contacts, one is inspired. Therefore, we should be with those who can give us such inspiration.

The real difficulty with genius, the creative spirit, the Truth is that you cannot really explain what it is or teach another person to acquire it. You have to learn to contact it by imperceptible means. Art has to be contacted thus and it has a very special message. Art means Beauty although today anything passes for Art. Dancers think that if they do anything with their bodies it is beautiful. In the Art galleries of today we see many horrors labelled as modern Art. Certainly, in the future, such Art will be looked down upon. In India at present, there is craze to copy this foolish phase.

Art means expressing beauty but we must remember that the unexpressed is also beautiful. Complete negation of movement is beautiful. Beauty is a very marvellous and cosmic thing. Human consciousness is on many planes. There is one part of it which is material and one which is divine. That part which is material belongs to the world of limitations. It is *slow, tamasic*, purely physical. So the mind is often physical, very concrete and narrow; but one sometimes comes across a mind that can fly to heaven. There are ordinary minds and spiritual minds. The spiritual is a God-like force. From my point of view, the Gods cannot speak too easily to humanity because humanity is very slow to understand. The Rishis and teachers have made great efforts to provide this contact through the Vedas, through poetry, through Religion, through beautiful and forceful language. They have tried to show us something of the other world. Does Art teach us something else?. If it does, what is it that it attempts to teach? It teaches us the same thing that the Rishis have taught. It shows us a suggestion of the Heaven world and puts it at our feet. Would you like to know what the Devas are like? Look at a beautiful dance; it comes from the Devas. Do you want to see something that comes from the Highest and yet belongs to the ordinary world, something marvellous that God has created? There is a flower right before your eyes.

Art is something that, so to speak, is placed right at your feet. Here before your very eyes is your divine self. You think the artist is someone outside yourself. You yourself are the artist and a creation of Art is your own creation. You have it in you to create. You can make beautiful poetry, you can write a wonderful book, you can sing this song. You will say, " I cannot do any of these things. I am afraid

even to attempt them". This means you can do it also. Art is a direct message from the Higher to the lower. Beauty is the most perfect language there is. You want the divine to speak. But we are hearing the divine speaking always. If we know how to hear music, we are hearing the divine speak. All of us have heard, only we do not know. We have seen the Art of the divine - though we do not realise it when we have seen a great dancer. But then we may say, "she is after all a human being". However, when she dances it is the divine spirit in her that dances and not the mere human body. If we learn to think this way, we will understand Art and its marvellous message. This divinity is a marvellous message to humanity - a direct gift. When we hear great music we feel so thrilled and stimulated that we feel we ourselves can create. If we really understand Art as a message of the Gods, then we will find that God Himself is Beauty. And the world should be filled with it. We must become God-like. We can do this, but we have to become filled with the spirit of pure Beauty, filled with a spirit of dedication. This means we have to expand emotionally and mentally so that we can enter into the spirit of Beauty, the spirit of Art, and be thrilled.

People often consider themselves 'hardboiled', using that term in a complimentary sense. Actually it is an unfortunate confession, a very sad thing. If there is nothing on earth that thrills them, what a sad position they are in! Every person should be sensitive enough to be moved deeply by something. It is better even to be moved to tears than not to be moved at all. The capacity to respond to emotion means something more than being merely emotional. Every time you are really thrilled by something, I am quite sure it makes you grow and you will never again be quite so small as you were before. The difference before and after may not be very great, but if we go through such experience constantly and are constantly inspired, one day we will transcend the ordinary. Every individual has, at least to a small extent, the power to be inspired. If one is cold and hard, then inspiration means nothing. But if we are capable of being inspired, it means two things. Firstly, that there is someone who has the capacity to inspire and, secondly, that we have the capacity to respond. It means that we can respond to Beauty. To some extent, it is because there are people who can respond to Beauty that is expressed in Art, not entirely to the artist alone. If nobody responds to music the singers will always

have to sing to themselves. Therefore, the spirit that can respond to the revelation of a very great artist can also show you the way magnificently. When you contact such art, when you hear the sound of music or see the colours in a beautiful picture, you not only hear the music or see the picture; you see into the very soul of the artist and, even more, you see the soul of Art itself.

In India today, we have a great work to do for the revival of the spirit of Beauty. There is a consciousness of the place of Art - but there is a lack of understanding of Art itself. As we travel in India today and visit famous places we see monuments and temples in ruins. No traveller or educated Indian visits any place for sight seeing except to see relics of the old civilisation which are of either religious or historical interest. In India, with very rare exceptions, the religious and the historical are combined. There is no history without Religion, nor monuments nor cities. This is a unique feature of India's life. This is why Indian Art is primarily a spiritual Art. Our conception of Art has come from the plane of intuition and therefore the fundamental difference between East and West seems to be that the East has emphasised the fact that a body is taken by the soul and therefore the soul has a body, while the Western conception is that the body has a soul. The Indian knows of the Himalayan heights and traces the Ganges from the source to the ocean, while a Westerner discovers the Ganges, and after travelling along the plains and climbing mountains, he finds the source.

If we, as Indians, cannot understand this spirit, we can never really revive Art. What we need in India is a revival of spirit, not a revival of Art forms. If we revive Art forms, we revive a dead body; if we revive the spirit, we not only revive the Art form but become the source of new forms which will be as beautiful as any that man has created. So many people speak of creating a new Art. In every field of Art in India efforts are being made in this direction. I am sorry to say that this effort is only producing ugliness instead of beauty because we are creating with the mind alone and not with the spirit. There are many modern-minded Indians today who decry what they call revivalism or tradition in Art. Usually these are people who neither understand Art nor India. For centuries and for thousands of years, India has not only preserved her religious spirit and tradition but has proved that

creative consciousness was an important feature of Indian Art. One of the greatest dangers for the artistic future of India is the fact that people of little knowledge are taking such an active part in it.

It is unfortunate, the number of crimes that are committed in the name of Art. As I have said before, Art in the hands of the ignorant can become a sacrilege. One sees it everywhere, in the theatre, in dancing, in the temples and monuments. But the dance, one need not see; one can avoid it. Yet how can one avoid seeing sacrileges like one sees in the Dilwara temples, in Chidambaram, in Mylapore and other places? As one travels, this brings greater sorrow than almost any other form of ugliness except cruelty. One sees constantly the hideous colours that are painted over Gopurams and the walls of shrines. Great kings built shrines out of their devotion, kings who worshipped not only in their hearts but kings who worshipped through Art, kings who inspired, encouraged and helped craftsmen whose work cannot even be imitated today. Such masterpieces that have inspired thousands of people, that are valued in every country and every museum in the world today, are neglected and forgotten. The other day I saw masterpieces of bronze which had once been buried underground during a Muhammadan invasion. Now they are unearthed and privately sold to connoisseurs and others. The possession of bronzes has become as important a craze as dancing. Shops are selling bronzes, real or unreal, to satisfy the craze. One of the amazing things of the present day is that ignorance can be satisfied by tricks. In the concert, tricks of the voice and glamorous noises of different instruments can please the audience and can pass off as music. In the dance, a dancer who has worked years to perfect the Art, who presents Art through simplicity is far less appreciated than one who studies for a short time, who can present glamorous clothes, jewels, etc. In the same way the bronze that is copied and made to look dull and old is as satisfying as the old image full of the atmosphere of centuries of worship. This is indeed Kaliyuga, for we may have ears but we do not hear, we have eyes but do not see. The old prayer "From the unreal lead me to the real, from darkness lead me to light, from death lead me to immortality" is applicable equally to Art, for what is Art but that which leads to reality, to light and to immorality?

It is because beauty is such a universal spirit that it can know no differences of nation, language or caste. All speak today about a national language. To me, the real national language is culture and any form that expresses culture is the language of the land. It is interesting to note how Art is the one thing which all nations recognise as a bridge. During the last war, many people and many countries gave up speaking German and would have nothing to do with Germany. But the only German born thing that was allowed in any country was the music of German composers such as Bach or Beethoven. In the love of Art, the nationality of the composer was forgotten. For a great artist, the world is his nation. In the division of India the greatest loss has been the cultural loss. In the North, craftsmen who make beautiful things, and wonderful musicians are Muslims. In music there are no barriers. Almost all Ustads sing of Krishna and Radha. If real artists had been the politicians there would have been no division of India. Art seems to be exempted from all barriers of birth. The Christian will enjoy a dance performance or even learn to dance, though it is known that every song is in praise of Krishna, Rama, Sita or Parvati. This interesting fact gives us an idea that perhaps in the new India, religion cannot be expressed in the old ways. If the religious spirit is to return it will be through beauty, through the presentation of drama, of music, of dance and of poetry. Only if India regains this spiritual outlook will it regain its place as the Centre of Culture, of Beauty of living, a land to be worshipped.

– T.R.Venkatarama Sastri Endowment Lecutre for 1950, delivered at South Indian National Association, Madras

India's Place in the Modern World

The subject of India is as you all know a favourite subject with me. Of course some people might think why should we not speak about the world, why about India always. Perhaps they do not realise that it is better that we should speak and think about India than about the world, because we should understand our country first in relation to our work, our responsibility. Also if you want to understand the whole world properly you must know the place in it of your particular country. In the history of the world, not only in modern times but in ancient times, India has played a far greater part than any other country in the world. India to me is not you and I, because I think sometimes mentally and emotionally we are not as Indian as we are physically. Also there are many here who are not Indian at all but may belong to some other country and may be incidentally in India today. So I am not speaking in terms of the people assembled here, of you and I, but more, in terms of the spirit in general. More in terms of the soul and the quality which I might call "Indian" rather than of the nationality. And it is that quality which sums up before our eyes and our minds the real essence and the nature of our India. What is the nature of the country, what is the essence of the country and what is its message?

First of all we must remember that the message which India has to give to the world is not your message or mine; you and I are not going to save the world. Even if we think that we are giving a special expression of our Indian life to the rest of the world, that we have got something very special to do, and if we really believe in it, then we must be special to start with and until we ourselves have developed that quality we have no message to give to the world. That is how I feel and I say this not only to the politician, who may think that he is bringing the message of

great peace to the rest of the world, but also equally to the man who seeks for spiritual well being. Perhaps a spiritual individual, or rather he who believes in spirituality - if he thinks that he is doing something for the rest of the world, and is conscious of it - in a way is even more dangerous. Because in the understanding of India and in the understanding of the contribution of India to the rest of the world, there has to be not only sincerity, but humility as well, besides understanding. The great question is, all of us who speak about India, do we really understand India? I cannot help it but I do think the majority of us do not understand. For what is India to me? Where do I see India? Is it on the map? Is it just a piece of land on the sea shore. Is it just a certain type of people? Where do I see this country?

I see it only in all the beautiful thoughts, in all the beautiful ideas, in all the great teachings, in all the qualities that have been emphasized again and again and again from time immemorial by great minds and it is the sum total of their teaching which has created an atmosphere, an undefinable atmosphere, which we cannot speak about, an atmosphere which calls from within you a very great reverence, an atmosphere which calls from within you a great sense of unity, of bigness and of tolerance. These are qualities that have sprung out of the manifold teaching of people of all religions, people of all castes, people of many languages, people from the North, the South, the East and the West, and the continuous message that has been given is the keynote which you might call India. We have to feel that atmosphere. You cannot analyse it, you cannot dissect it, you cannot tear it to bits. You have to feel it. If you want to feel it, you must be really sincere and secondly you must be sensitive. We cannot be sensitive if we surround ourselves with superficialities, if we surround ourselves by a way of thinking and doing which is meaningless, and as far as I can see, in modern India this is exactly what we are doing.

India for ages has spread her wings upon many lands and Indian culture has penetrated deeply into many nations. What is it that attracted almost the entire East and a great part of the West to India? You can see the result of Indian culture when you go far away into Java, when you go to Bali, when you go to China, to Japan, to Korea and to Tibet. Wherever you go you see India.

They are different peoples but still you see the Indian spirit. What conquered, so to speak, the rest of the world was the message of the Great Teachers of India. May be Hinduism, may be Buddhism, whatever name you might like to call it but the power of it was so great, the beauty of it was so great, that even the language, Sanskrit, and its culture has made a great impression on world culture. So it was not wealth, it was not the army, but it was the quality which I speak about, which had conquered. And later perhaps combined there might have been other things, even wealth, that brought the West to the East, that brought the West to India. And from that came the civilisation of the West to this country. The West might have done a great deal of good, because the contact is necessary, but at the same time it has destroyed a great deal.

And now, when we are free, politically I mean, not spiritually, now that we are free, free from exterior domination, what is the situation in India? Now we are speaking about India's voice being heard in the rest of the world. What is India's voice today? Is India attractive to the rest of the world because it is very rich? Is it attractive because it is greatly developed scientifically? Is it attractive because it has great power, because it is giving a great spiritual message? What is it? What is attractive about India today? It is indeed a strange thing, that it still continues to attract. May be it is because what has been built up for thousands of years has not yet been completely destroyed. It cannot easily be destroyed. But changes had to come; changes came, our minds have changed with it. Spiritual movements came into existence. Pioneer movements came into existence in order not only to free India, from political domination, but also to free India from her own narrowness, her own limitations, from her own cruelty shall I say, or intolerances that had crept into a culture which had taken thousands of years gradually to develop. The great Truths were submerged under superstitions. Many great Leaders came. Social reformers changed the nature of the country. And the greatest of all was the coming of great Teachers, like Dr. Besant who gave India a vision of herself, so that India could see herself clearly as in a mirror, to see what is wrong, what is right, what is true, what is untrue. And to make them face themselves, and to stand upon their own feet and learn to give that voice, that message. And so

there was not only the movement for political freedom on one hand, but there was also the movement for a spiritual freedom on the other hand and the two had to go together.

Political freedom by itself is no freedom at all, as we see today. We are not free at all. We are suffering, really even from our own freedom. Because we have, unfortunately, won this freedom by certain means which are reacting upon us. So the result is that even though India's voice is very very important amongst the nations of the world, still the question that is being asked is how can we speak about peace for the world when there is no peace in our own country. How can we speak about neutrality, how can we speak about justice, when we have perhaps not yet learnt to express our own opinion and speak up in regard to the affairs of the world. We are in a state of confusion and even otherwise, look at all the things that we are going through politically. India was a disunited country in a way, because we are individualistic people. Because of foreign domination we came together and there was unity, apparent unity. And now again, our weakness is seen, for there is in us this inability to unite. Therefore politically we are going through this great crisis, in our nation. It is a very great crisis that we are going through. If politically this is the crisis we are going through, what is the crisis that we are going through spirituality? I would say to you, spiritually we are going through even greater a crisis, because there cannot be a political crisis without a spiritual crisis. There cannot be a crisis in the world except that which comes as a result of loss of character. Now you may ask me, why is it that I still believe. I still believe in India because the greatness behind all this superficiality still exists the atmosphere behind our beliefs still exists. The message of life that India has to give still is there. But what about us? In what way are we really, when we speak about India's place in the world, in what way is each individual here taking his place in the world. In what way is an Indian contributing to the welfare of the world. It is very sad to see that today cultural and spiritual chaos is even greater than any other. Don't think therefore that when I say this, that you and I are going to be able to change it and that we are superior. I do not feel that at all. In fact there are many people who do not speak, who do not know how to speak, people who are not educated, people who are not trying to save other people, who are far superior to

us. In fact they are superior to us because they are just themselves and do not bother about anything else.

If we are to really understand and to do something, we have got to be ourselves. It is so easy to speak about how to change the character of others, but oh so difficult to change our own character and that is really what it amounts to, and yet that is what we have to do. If we have to speak for India's place, the regeneration of India, the welfare of India, the spirituality of India, then I say all right, if you believe in it, first of all be Indian. Secondly, understand. How to understand and what? It is not very easy explain. Perhaps it is meditation, a form of meditation, by which we have to enter into the spirit and the atmosphere that is around. The atmosphere of the spirituality of India, created by the Lord Buddha, the atmosphere created by the Bhagavad Gita, the atmosphere created in the temples, in the arts and in the beauty and the nature that you find. In all the great religious Centres, even where you find pilgrims ignorantly going to worship, at the Ganges or at a temple, everywhere you find people chanting, perhaps following superstitions, but still in their sincerity and their prayer you will find a quality, you will find a true devotion that is the spirit of India. It is possible to get in touch with this atmosphere if you make the attempt to go out of your way to discover it. That is the real discovery of India. Each of us has to discover it and it is only by realising our own spirit that we shall be able to give a contribution towards the welfare of the world.

That is the fundamental quality the keynote according to me, which India should give towards the rest of the world. I am quite convinced, when I see the present conditions of the world, that each catastrophe is bringing people nearer to a Truth. Each war is bringing the consciousness of a greater truth. Each war, each tragedy has brought the world, mainly shall I say the Western world, to a consciousness and recognition of other cultures, other countries, other languages, other religions. People are forced through the circumstances to recognise others and I only wish that we could recognize it without force. I wish we could realise it without so much suffering, but it is evidently the nature of humanity that we have to learn only by suffering. So these wars have brought a consciousness of the unity

of nations, of people, even in spite of disunity which give rise to war. There is prejudice, there are barriers, there is the sense of superiority, not only between nation and nation, but even within the nation, between language and language, like sometimes we have in India itself, between province and province. When will that go? It will take time because circumstances will again force us to realise we cannot continue to live as we have lived. The world has to recognize there can be no colour barrier, nor can there be a religious barrier. In India we are forced by circumstances to give up the many differences between ourselves and barriers are disappearing. So also is the world changing. It is by force that this is happening, by force of circumstances. If we really understand the message of India we can bring to the world an understanding which goes beyond force. It is the message of great teachers no other country has had. An enormous galaxy of greatness that we have inherited - in teachings, the poetry, in the arts, it is amazing. I am surprised that India is not a perfect country when I think of all this greatness that has existed and influenced thought. Why is it so far removed from what is happening today. I suppose it is because great people teach and point the way. But they can just teach and be examples for others to follow. Only we have to live. We have to learn by experience and we cannot learn only by teachings. We cannot learn only by listening and mouthing words. We have to learn only by living it ourselves for finally, there is only one teacher-LIFE. Therefore we find this great gap between all the marvellous teaching and the poor reflection of it in what we are today. Yet this is the real voice of India, and it is this voice that has to be heared and conveyed. The spirit of the sanctity and the oneness of all life.

This is why in this country more than anywhere else has grown the great ideal of Vegetarianism. To be really spiritual, to live spiritually, ultimately you must recognize the sanctity of every living creature. You must feel one with the suffering of every living creature. You must understand that compassion is not just speaking or doing a kind act. The kindest thing that anyone can do is not to exploit another. This is the great teaching of the Buddha; the teaching of Sri Krishna. From time immemorial it has been a living belief in India. Vegetarianism is not merely a concept of what to eat, it is a way of life. It is life itself. It is a fundamental quality, a fundamental teaching, that recognizes the sanctity of all life. And from

this fundamental approach arises an entire philosophy of the sanctity of all mankind.

It will take a long time for a new United Nations to come. An United Nation which will recognize equality fraternity and liberty not only of all peoples but the fraternity and liberty of every living creature. How many wars will there have to be before such a United Nations comes into existence, I wonder. Let us hope it does not mean that we have to have another war. Ultimately the world has to believe. But until it comes to that view point, there is bound to be chaos, because you see, we have created a background of suffering, we have created a background of unspoken misery.

What is Indian culture? Is it learning? Learning, art, religion, every single thing that lifts and instructs finally pertains only to life. Living is the essence. The essence of art is to make you to understand the principle of oneness with all life. The essence of science also is this sense of unity, ultimately which underlies all life. That is science. What is religion?. Religion teaches you how to live. It teaches you compassion, and understanding of all life. In other words, character, brotherhood and compassion are all learnt through the percepts of religion.

Politics is also trying to express something of all these truths. Many people say now that they don't want religion, they want only science. All right, science is the great God of the modern world. Yes all right, but science is religion in its real sense. If they will accept science in its real sense, then you may discard religion. It does not matter. You are only giving another name to it, that is all. Because a real understanding of science leads you to understanding life. And if you know life, you can call it *Dharma*, you can call it religion, you can call it Islam, you can call it art, you can call it anything else. What is in a name? So in the modern age let us have *Science*. The unfortunate thing is that the development of science is sometimes in the wrong direction although here and there are many great scientists who have glimpsed the truth behind the physical world. If they are great enough, they are transcending these limitations and are coming to wonderful spiritual conclusions. Still as a whole, in the world today, science has not allied itself to high spiritual quality. That which is meant to unite does very often the opposite. It is the misuse of a great force. The only way, when science will really triumph, is when it discovers

that finally unity is the greatest thing. And this ultimately will lead to a sense of compassion and understanding. It is the same with any other knowledge whether it is art or religion. As I said circumstances today are forcing politicians to discover the oneness of the world. I have often said, it is not the one world that we must look for, it is the one life. And unless we come to that we cannot really think of happiness in the world. And that is the message that India has to give. You might say, why does only India have to teach that. Of course, it does not mean that other countries and other great men have not realised it. Many great thinkers and artists all over the world have discovered the Truth. Leonardo da Vinci, Abraham Lincoln, and many many others, because the thinking of all great people is one. Human experience is the same wherever you are born. Yet it has been the fundamental keynote of India to give this great teaching. The cultural background of India has been conclusive for great Teachers to give this message. The background has made it possible for great teachers of humanity to be born in this soil time and again to speak, unridiculed, and to give expression to this message.

What is modern India doing now? What is the contribution we are making today? We are living upon the past. We are tremendously proud of the contributions made by Buddha, by Sri Krishna and others. But what is the contribution we are making today? And if we say that we are really going to help the world, if we say that we want to make a contribution to the rest of the world, then I would like to suggest that at least amongst a few of us there should be a kind of a spiritual awakening. That we should be absolutely sincere and simple and begin at the beginning and plunge ourselves heart and soul into the very essence and spirit of this country. Of course, when I was very young, when I heard Dr. Besant speaking so powerfully, I wondered why she liked this country. I saw so many things wrong with it. I still do - in fact even more things than before. And yet when I saw the great reverence with which she spoke and when I saw for example one day when she came back from a Western country, how she took the dust from the earth and put it on her forehead and said; "this is the land on which great and holy feet have trodden", I began to feel the spirit that moved her and I saw that she saw India, not with our eyes, but with different eyes and that is how we have to learn to see, that is the only way we can see any nation at all, because the present India is changeable.

This present is not the permanent India. We have to see the real India its unchanging spirit, the unchanging quality, the eternal atmosphere of the Rishis, the eternal atmosphere of the Sages. It is that which we must see and that we must put into every action and into every aspect of life. Are we doing it in every aspect of life? Are we doing it in education? Are we not doing harm to our young people. We might blame the Government and say look at the kind of education they are giving. All right, let the Government do what it likes; what are you doing in your homes for the children? What are the parents doing for the children? What is the atmosphere they are creating for their children? It is unfortunate to see how utterly ignorant young Indians are. When I travel in the West, sometimes young people come to my lectures, not because they want to hear my lectures, but because they say they don't know how to answer some questions others are asking about India and they hope they will get something from me. And they suddenly urgently feel the need of knowing something and they hurriedly read the Bhagavad Gita and a few books in order to reply to the questions asked by others. This is what is happening. This is what we are doing to our young people. I do not say we should give them the same kind of religion or the same kind of a belief. But do we give them atleast the background? Do they know what our forefathers thought, how they felt? Do they know the atmosphere in which our culture has grown, how it was developed and how new things can be created out of that atmosphere. It need not be copied anymore. But the spirit can live again. Changes are taking place in many ways for the better. As far as women are concerned, the place of women in modern India has certainly improved. Whatever people may say, there is no doubt about it. One of the biggest things that has been done in India since freedom is what has been accomplished in this area and the possibilities available now for the woman.

Today, there is freedom. Freedom for the women, freedom for the youth, freedom for the old, freedom for all - but freedom towards what purpose, freedom to do what? This is the question I think we should all ask ourselves. And there is no doubt in my own mind that if we can answer that question then only will we be really free.

- Lecture at the Theosophical Convention, December 1960.

Art Education

Education and art should go together. Education can never be real education unless art is included, unless art is an integral part of it. So also, art education is incomplete without being connected with educational work. Because of this, I am happy to inaugurate this Seminar on Art Education. It has often been stressed, and I agree with Mr.Goodwin, that what is important is not that young people should be made into artists. That I consider is for the specialised school where there is, what might be called, the professional artist whose life consists in the production of works of art and that can only belong to the few, because not many are born geniuses.

As you know, I am interested in art, music and drama and so on. Great teachers have said that there are four important factors in the making of an artist. The first consists of opportunities that we have through our birth; secondly, the opportunities that we have because of our talents and our own hard work; the third is the opportunity of coming to the right teacher and lastly, the right atmosphere. Most of us believe we bring from our past, certain aptitudes not only from one incarnation but from many incarnations.

Therefore, there are many factors in the life of an individual which we have to consider. We have also to consider first the atmosphere or the genius of the country-the national genius, the national psychology, the national outlook which we cannot help bringing with us and is part of our nature. So the individual approach is also connected with the national approach. It is very important to consider this because without this there can never be a national expression, the expression of the genius of the country. Because the national genius of each country is different,

each country is able to contribute something very unique. Whatever the variety, whatever the differences of each country, whatever the genius of each country, we who are working in the field of art, can have only the universal outlook which art produces. Art is perhaps the most universal language that exists in the world. It cannot have any kind of difference - of race, colour, caste or politics.

Incidentally, I would like to mention my visit to Indonesia to see the Ramayana festival. The Ramayana festival was very interesting for me, because there was a series of productions of the Ramayana with the same theme, the same ideas. The Ramayana had its origin in India but it finds expression in many different countries in South East Asia. With a slight change in the story, a different way of presentation, different costumes and different music, the same theme is expressed in so many different ways. It was interesting to me because all the productions I saw were beautiful but different from what we have in India. What I should like to point out is that there is so much room in the field of art for different expressions and different creative forms; not only for the creative expression of the individual but for the creative expression of the nation as well. It was most fascinating to me that there was at that Festival an expression of the universality of art, of beauty and this we have to understand when we discuss the question of art education, in schools and in colleges and so on.

Now, to me, art education is an extraordinarily important thing. To me this means not only the teaching of art to the students. Many of our schools in India have drawing masters and I do not know what the name means except that a drawing master has to take a certain diploma and he is to teach art in schools to our children, whether the teachers are creative or not. If we are to develop art in our present day schools, we have to develop it in spite of teachers. Mr. Srinivasulu, a teacher in our school had all the diplomas that were necessary but he had the advantage of having diplomas plus something else. He was able to do something more. Therefore, there is no doubt that if we want to really develop art in the schools, and colleges, we need not only the diploma but a person with tremendous imagination and ideas, a person who can understand the students as well. There is a profound saying in education; if you want to teach Krishna mathematics, you must not only know mathematics but

you must also know Krishna. Therefore, if you want to teach art in schools and colleges, you must not only know art or your own individual expression of it, but you must also know the person to whom you are imparting the art.

Another important thing is this. I feel that art education should not only include creative art where the talents of the teachers are used but should also include artistic expression in life. I personally feel that artistic taste must be part of our life in general. I do not know the scope of this seminar, but one thing depresses me. There is so much emphasis laid on the teaching of art within the class room that art is forgotten outside it. I do not understand how you can dissociate life from art. Art should permeate the entire life.

The whole problem is not only of teaching art in education, but of imparting education itself through art. It could be done through art. Some think that it is only in art schools that you learn art and that other schools need not have it; but I think art must permeate every single class-of geography, history and other subjects, and the teacher of art in that way is the most important person in the school. He must see to it that the student appreciates and understands everything beautiful. It is not only young persons who can appreciate art, but an older individual can appreciate beauty, particularly from nature; for, after all, nature is our inspiration. Nature is the great inspiration. I have seen that many people can appreciate the loveliness of a tree or a forest when they see it in a picture. We have forgotten the tree as it were and we remember it only when we see it in a book or in the picture. We enjoy the sunset in the picture but do not look at it when it is in front of our eyes. The eyes of the student must be opened to nature. Because, ultimately, however great a teacher may be, a teacher is only a guide who points the way. He can help the students express their own urge, in their own way and their own form of expression. If the student is artistic, he goes to the teacher and seeks out ways and means of deriving inspiration and expressing his own feelings in art so that he can go beyond the Guru. It is the Guru who can discover the students talents and help them to express in their own way - I personally feel that the technique of art is only an instrument and what matters is how you use the instrument. That is what is important. So, the teacher is only a guide. He is not there merely to thrust a particular technique on a child; the technique

must be understood by the student and he must discover his own genius, his own expression and even more, he must learn to be inspired. If people are inspired, they automatically become creative. After all, what is creative art? It is something very wonderful. Why am I interested in dance drama? Because I am inspired by it. How does a poet write poetry-because he is inspired-he knows how to use the language, how to wield the instrument of language.

Art education is so important that I wish we would impress upon the Government and others to realise how vital it is. The class room should be beautiful but artistic taste is lacking at present. The participants in this Seminar may discuss this aspect.

In Hungary, where I was last year, I discovered every single student had to undergo a course in music appreciation although he may not be a musician. The Government there cares more about the audience than about the artist. The artist will express beauty of his own accord. Every student, every person must be educated so that he may be able to appreciate beauty and express that beauty, and art in his own life. For this we have to help people to develop a sensitivity to life, sensitivity to nature and beauty, and to learn to use the five senses with which we are created. They must also learn how to make art permeate life.

The importance of environment cannot be overstressed. For example, our school buildings are ugly. Whether they are so in England, I do not know. In India the buildings are very ugly. How can anybody create art in such an environment? Educational institutions have to be beauty spots.

What kind of art must we teach? I do not know whether it is within the scope of this Seminar to discuss this question. No artist should lay down the law that we must teach this kind of art or that kind of art. In one sentence, I can sum up, that art is so great, so wonderful, so creative that it becomes a great inspiration both to the individual and to the nation. No nation can be great where the level of art is not great. I am not a fanatic, but I am sure you will all agree with me that we must help create a great nation. The creative aspect is the first urge in every student. Not in memorizing lessons. But we do not know what he wants, and it is

the business of the teacher to find out what he wants to give him an opportunity to fulfil himself, to discover himself and to become a worthy and great citizen of the country.

I do not want to take any more of your time. I have just given you some of my views with which you are at liberty to completely disagree, because for us it is not agreement that matters. But we must agree upon one thing-that is, what is art, how to teach art and how to bring out the creative aspect in the pupil and how to make a great contribution to national and international life. We must also realise that art is the great, beautiful, universal language by which the world can come together.

I am very happy to inaugurate this Seminar and I am very happy indeed also to have had my little share in it. I am glad that the British Council and the Indian Council for Cultural Relations of which I am also a member, have organised it. I hope many artists will come from many countries. If they do, it will widen our outlook and give us further opportunities for great creative work and provide an atmosphere in which creative teachers of art will be produced.

– Inaugural Address - Seminar on Art education - 05.10.1971

The Teacher and the Pupil

I wonder to what extent people realise that the foundation of all our work is in education. We all lecture, talk and write in order to affect the minds of people in some way but do not realise that those who can most easily be changed are the young. We take so much trouble to change adults and when we find no response in them, are disheartened and wonder what we must do. There is one answer to that question which every person should think about, because it is the one and only solution. It is Education. Personally, I do not think there ought to be any group of idealists, who do not do some work, at least, along educational lines, without doing something for children, because children are the best material. For those who would work for humanity in some direct way, the easiest thing of all is to work with youth and above all with childhood. The young are easy only for those who can understand youth, who really love young people, not for those who only think they must love them. A large number of us belong to the latter type and that is why our work for youth is not successful. Really to love the young is the first and greatest of all qualifications for educating them. The second requirement is not to have forgotten one's own youth. Many people have. They always say from generation to generation that those who have grown old do not understand the young and yet it is strange that the very ones that complain, when they become old, are not able to understand their younger generation. The reason is that they have forgotten their youth. If we can remember what we were all like then, what reactions we had, we can understand youth and, even more, we can remain young. Some people wonder how to remain youthful even in the advent of age. The best of all treatments is always to enjoy the company of the young. I have met some of the greatest educationists in the world and they have all been youthful. In fact they

have been almost like children. Madame Montessori when she was nearly eighty, was one of the most youthful human beings I had ever come across. One could easily have said that she was eighty years young. It is the same with many others whom I have seen working with children, because being in the company of children has given them a new outlook, a new experience, so that they are eternally alive and youthful in the right sense of the term. This is the great secret of youth.

So we must begin to educate from a fundamental point of view. Many people begin either keeping in mind only what are the latest modern developments in education or what great psychologists say. I do not find much glamour just in the words *modern* or *new* alone. I do not mean that I do not believe anything new because I do, but I think we sometimes consider that anything new is progressive. Now, everything new is *not* progressive, because all depends on how something is new and what is the origin of the newness. It may come from the mind or from what I might call the creative spirit which is much higher than the mind or the emotions. It is only that which originates in this spirit that can touch the world of reality, of evolution, of movement and of renewing life. Once we touch that creative power we are new, not because we want to be, but because we cannot help it. From a certain point of view, there is nothing new at all in the world. Some of the latest things they speak of in the West, can be read of in the ancient Sanskrit books written a few thousand years ago. I can tell you this - not from theory, but from my experience in Art.

My new motto in life is: *Educate the educator*. That is what we want. One of my programmes is to give the concept of culture as part of educating the educated. Sometimes I have given lectures before great Sanskrit scholars and very learned people, and they have asked me to demonstrate to them what has been said in the ancient text books on the dance. I have told them that I would not be able to quote from the ancient books as I was not learned, but that I would speak of my own experience in Art, and demonstrate that which I have discovered myself. If there were any ancient passages that would fit my experience, then I would request them to give the references. Indeed we found that what I spoke of and demonstrated from my own personal discovery had been anticipated and spoken of in those old

classics. It was a wonderful discovery for me to find that experience is essentially one. This is an important thing that we have to realise. The tradition of experience that goes side by side with the experience of another - not the make believe of another - is what I call Truth. It is through personal and individual experience, through work, through creative activity that we discover the Truth. That is the only way in which to approach education, because what the educationists say is less important than our own experience with the child, which we have to put side by side with the experience of others. We must discover how far the person who writes books on education really loves children. If we love children and work with them, we know whether the educationists loved children or whether they just loved education as an idea.

When I was speaking at the UNESCO, during the Educational Conference, I said that we had all spoken about education because we love education, but that we had forgotten one thing: that the person to be loved is the one to be educated and not education itself as such. We have a tendency sometimes to get absorbed by the idea alone and forget human values and the human side. So our greatest educator is the child. We must remember that we are not educating the child, but that the child is educating us. He is teaching us what to teach him. We have preconceived ideas. We say: We must teach the child this or that, we must train him to be this, that or the other, but our ideas of training him must change because we have in front of us a creative artist who is changing all the time. That creative artist is the child. He expands our outlook to new ideas, we become renewed because of him and thus make new discoveries. Take for instance the Montessori Method. I remember Madame Montessori telling me that one of her great sorrows was that even those trained by her saw only the method and not the spirit behind it. How very true, I thought. It is the Montessori spirit we want and not so much the method - not that the method is wrong, it can be creative too - but if we stagnate and become immersed in the method, then, two hundred years hence, we will still be using those little materials and shall have become slaves to the method of forgetting the purpose for which it was invented. So, if we are true to the spirit of real education, we must make it creative. The only right person to be a teacher is obviously the one alone who can love not only the work of such,

but him to whom the work is performed. If a teacher cannot do this, obviously, he must find other work to do.

Let us look back and see how the great Sages have spoken of the profession of a teacher. At one time it was considered that only one person was fit to be a teacher - the noblest person in the land, the greatest person - not one who strives for high position. No one could become a teacher who was not able to teach with his personality, not only with method and ability. We may have knowledge, ability, love; but more than that, we must teach in other ways than by obvious teaching. The majority of us learn more than we think when we are not formally learning. When we are asked to learn something we do not learn so much. But when we forget about it and enjoy observing something, we begin to absorb that something into ourselves. Children especially, learn more outside the class room than in it. Therefore, when we think of education, school alone is not sufficient. The home and the school have to go hand in hand. Everyone recognises nowadays that the first seven years of the child are the foundation for the rest of his life. One of the greatest of Teachers, the Manu, had said: "Let a child be with his mother for the first seven years". Now we have Montessori schools where there are children below that age, but in the ancient days the Montessori school was in the home. The Montessori teacher was the mother. By her love for the child, she created the individual. From the age of seven onwards, the child went to his teacher. And what was the school? What should be the school? The school should be an extension of the home. We do not go from the home to school, we can bring the school to the home from the time a child is born. The whole atmosphere is thus a continuity through life, and the student learns that he should never stop learning. This is where the art of teaching comes in. When he knows that learning is a process without end then he is fit to be a citizen of the world. There is a story of a great Teacher who had a student who learnt everything from him. The student was brilliant. At last the teacher said: "I don't know what more to teach you,: and the student answered: "I have learnt everything from you and now I am ready to go out into the world". The teacher replied: "yes, you may, if you feel that you have learnt". So the student departed, but when he went and found himself in the world, he discovered that there was one thing he had not learnt, namely, humility. So he

came back to his teacher and said: "I have not finished my learning, will you accept me again as your pupil?" and then the teacher blessed him and said: "Now that you have learnt the lesson of humility you may go out into the world". So it was only when he had learnt humility that he was considered to have finished his education and that is the essence of learning. We have therefore. to have a clear perception of what is education.

It has been said many times that education is the drawing down of the soul into outer expression. Dr.Arundale once used a phrase: "The teacher is a messenger between the soul and the body". So, let us remember that the root of education is in the knowledge of the child, of the student. And how do we obtain the knowledge? We know that the individual who is in front of us has not merely come into the world for the first time. He brings something with him and it is for us to intuit what are the talents, the weakness, the emotions, the mind that he brings with him and it is only when we understand this, that we will know what to teach him. Because surely we should know what *he* wants to learn. But usually, we decide what *we* want to teach and we never seek to find out what he wants to learn for the child cannot answer in any usually understood language. So we think he is dull and we must thrust on him all the knowledge that we have. Ninety times out of a hundred, our subconscious idea of education is to make the child exactly like ourselves, because subconsciously we think that we are perfect beings. We must give him right education. Why? Because we are the right persons to give it. We have the best ideas in the world and have read the best books and we know - unfortunately others do not know.

What a thing it is to be a teacher! We have to be spiritual individuals. We have to be *yogis* to be teachers, because we have to remove ourselves from the picture, The one person who should not exist in a class room is the teacher and when he is actually there, he must not be there so to speak. So the abolition of oneself is the foundation of right teaching. If we forget ourselves and then remember the child a little more than we generally do, we will begin to know what he wants. Remember that to find out what he wants is a very big piece of work. How can we achieve this knowledge? We can only achieve it in one way - as in many other

things - by meditation, by meditating upon the child. Let us not therefore go and sit cross-legged before him, but let us try to enter completely into this consciousness, to feel as he does, to discover the meaning of his actions and his words, to feel with our sensitivity, and then somehow, little by little, by our daily meditation on the child - on the child in front of us, *not* the child in general - we shall find out what he wants. We love children in general, but it is necessary to love the child, the particular child that has come to us. As the child changes, our meditation must be renewed and then only shall we begin is discover what he wants to know and we shall begin to equip ourselves to teach him. No diploma in a training college alone is going to equip us for this. In a college we shall learn subjects, but not that particular quality of meditation, because when we have learnt everything and discovered a particular child and have taught him, a new problem is presented with the next child that comes to us for education and we have to discover what he needs. We discover also that we do not know how to teach him what he needs and so we begin to learn. We become learners every day. We go on learning in order to go on teaching and we go on discovering so as to give that discovery to the child. We can now understand why the teacher was called the noblest individual and why teaching was considered the noblest profession. When we teach, we have created the world, we have changed the world, we have started the building of a new world, and if we have successfully taught that child, remember what he is going to make of his country and of the world tomorrow. Every teacher is thus made tremendously responsible, with a very noble and spiritual mission.

In all this, we should use the many things created around us. Unfortunately we do not do so. We forget the emotion of the child. At first the child learns unconsciously. Then he begins to learn consciously and our method of teaching must change accordingly. Up to a point, the whole of humanity learns unconsciously far more than we realise. When I speak of absorbing knowledge, this is done not by racking our brains and learning; we seem to learn through all our senses: through our intelligence, our emotions, our sensitiveness, our fingers, our eyes and our ears. We absorb the life around us and finally that becomes knowledge or whatever name we like to call it. During this period of life it is most important to provide the learner with all the things in the environment which the five sense should

absorb. At this time, Art and beauty are the most vital things for harmonious growth because then we are laying the foundation of the culture of the human being. We all talk about culture; we work for art and want people to be cultured, but how much hard work it entails to make education culture centered. We want to give music to those who can unconsciously absorb it, namely to children. Art has therefore an important and essential place in education - in the home, outside the home, in the class room, in everything. Not only must we teach Art, but we must teach *through* Art. This we do not realise. We teach literature - but if only we can make the student understand the beauty of literature, then automatically the rest will follow of itself. Unfortunately, we concentrate upon the brain, we want to pump knowledge into it and as a consequence the brain becomes over-developed or under-developed as the case may be. Therefore, we do not have a balanced human being. Every individual is emotional by nature but we do not provide education for the emotions. First of all, we do not know the science of the emotions. Of course we quote modern psychologists. I think modern psychology is very interesting, but it is based on preconceived ideas. It is dependent on human reactions. It tries to find out not what we are, and what we express, instead of *why* we express certain things. It does not discover the root-cause nor attempts to go back to the source, whereas ideas must come from the source and work outwards. This is the difference between ancient and modern psychology. I believe a time will come when we will begin to see the need for that approach from within, and not treat the symptoms but their cause

If we understand this point of view, we begin to see that every child comes into the world with a certain atmosphere of heavenly beauty and waits to absorb the heaven that is without. But we do not give him that heaven, but only hell so to speak. Because we do not give him that beauty, what happens is that his emotions do not develop hand in hand with his mind and therefore the mind becomes dominant. As we know the human mind has now become a destructive force in the world. A constructive potency lies in the development of the emotions. Emotion is the cause of action, of activity. Activity comes from impulse, from feeling. We find among children a tremendous amount of activity, very often uncontrolled activity, because they do not know how to control their energies and misdirect

them. This is called mischief, unruliness, lack of discipline, etc. So we say that we must discipline the young. How are we to do this? One of the greatest of disciplining forces is art, because art is a harmoniser. To learn a particular art is a discipline in itself. It is a disciplining of energy which will create something. Energy is not wasted, so that whether it is dance, or music, or painting, an outlet of creative expression results. Immediately there is satisfaction, joy, inspiration, harmony. We even discover that an individual can often completely change in such an environment. From the time that a child is born, there must be the atmosphere of beauty around him. In this respect, we can learn a few things from other nations. In Japan, so I am told, they had a marvellous tradition. When grown-ups quarreled, they would immediately retire to a room where there were no children so as not to utter a harsh word in front of them, because they were greatly afraid that the children might learn a bad lesson from watching their elders. We must remember that we influence children not only by what we teach but by what we are. So, in Japan, they made a great policy of keeping the children happy surrounding them with beauty and grace. We can lift humanity to a higher level by providing means for that development, and if we do so, not only will humanity change, but a finer type of people will be born into the world.

This is the real nature of education. This is the external part of it. The internal part is the relationship between the teacher and the taught; that tremendous link, that loving spirit which completely enfolds the two - whether the teacher be the mother or a teacher in school. But towards that end which includes the training of the emotions, must come the teaching of Art. Why? Because we must keep human beings human. Now we are called human beings, but we are not at all human, if you understand what I mean. What does the word 'human' mean? It means "beings with hearts", that is all. Therefore we need now the education of the heart. People understand the education of the mind, but not the education of the heart, and to achieve that we need art, because art is the refiner of the emotions. When I speak of art, I mean *real* art. Nowadays we have to speak of real and unreal art; of real religion and unreal religion; of real brotherhood and unreal brotherhood. I speak about *real* Art that elevates, inspires, and uplifts. We need it so that we can still have hearts though we have grown up. We have to grow up

keeping that fine emotion, with all that sensitiveness, that grace and beauty that exist in a child. We often kill these. Children usually have better taste than grown-ups because in them, taste is an instinct; they cannot argue about it, they just have taste, that is all. But we kill natural taste in children by wrong education. We need the purifying and spiritualising influence of beauty in order that the individual can become a great citizen of the world. Wherever the mind and the emotions go side by side, they make the perfect individual and we must work for that. When I say '*perfect*', I do not say we can be perfect, but greatness, beauty of living, can be achieved.

There are three aspects of education which I consider important. First Art and beauty, secondly Religion, thirdly Love. It may be said that religious education already exists in various countries. But when I say Religion I do not mean any particular religion or anything sectarian, but that spirit that makes one feel that there is something to live for, an ideal which one sets before oneself towards which one attempts to grow. This is the spirit which is behind religion and religions. Why do we need that spirit? We need it because one of the things that humanity is suffering from today, is selfishness. Selfishness, I think, is the root cause of our troubles - nothing else. Why is it that we have become more selfish in this Kali Yuga? It has happened because we have become god in our own eyes. When we say we do not look up to God or anything else, what happens? We say: let us be ourselves, our ideas are the most important; nothing else matters. Subconsciously we mean *We are the ultimate, everything is 'I' and 'We'*. We must get rid of the *I* from education and therefore we must abolish ourselves and have before ourselves a vision towards which we move, and as we reach near we humble ourselves before that which is greater than us. In India we call this reverence. Reverence means we are humble because we recognise greatness. We have forgotten ourselves because we remember something else. Reverence to nature, to life, to greatness, to truth, to beauty - that is the essential spirit of Religion.

The third important aspect of education is always to emphasise that finally there is only one thing that is of value, however learned we may be, however great we are, and that is our love for others, our love for all creatures, our love for

humanity - in fact Love itself. Ultimately, that is the only thing that is of value, and we must do everything to educate people and children to retain that love. That is why I do a great deal in my school to make children feel for the animals and the birds, because that is all part of the reverence for life. They naturally love animals. Children, in the beginning, love animals more than human beings - except perhaps their mothers and fathers - because animals are much more in their own environment of naturalness, simplicity and beauty. This environment is the common language they can speak with one another. We must keep that sympathy, keep that love because love for the smallest creature will surely be the love for the life of all and the love for the younger kingdoms of nature will certainly lead to the love of everything else.

I will finish with the great ideal that the Lord Vaivasvata Manu, one of the greatest Teachers of India, put before the students, in what He called the Forest Universities - Forest Universities because nature was understood to be an important factor in education. We speak about art and beauty, but what greater art, what greater beauty is there than in Nature? The first object of education according to Him, is Service. The second object is Study, because study is for service. The third object is the achievement of simplicity and self-control - not discipline in the sense of asking the child to do what we tell him, but making him understand what he wants to tell himself. This is true discipline. The final result will be the development of the complete individual, who can truly be a citizen of the world.

- Lecture - Besant Culture Centre

Future of Education in India

Almost everyone recognises that the greatest crisis in our national life is the crisis in Education and when we see the present condition of our country we are alarmed at the prospects for the future. But it seems to me that very little is really being done to change the situation and if anything is being done, it is generally in a superficial way, trying to cure the disease from the outside instead of from the inside. One chief reason for this lack of right action is the lack of vision. The majority of those who are responsible, cannot achieve anything because they themselves are products of a system of education which took us away from our roots. We are at present neither foreigners, however much we may try to imitate them, nor Indians. The result is that we do not understand India's needs or India's youth. We have learnt administration up to a point but administration is not education. Our Universities suffer from this lack of vision. They are a mixture of red tape and unimaginative curriculum. People are alarmed at the state of Indian youth in colleges and schools. We blame them for their lack of discipline and manners. Who is to blame for this but ourselves? In my opinion college going people have still within them the traditional Indian quality of refinement and reverence. But alas, they are unfortunate, for there are few to love them and to give them understanding leadership.

There is absolutely no other way of changing the youth of our country except by completely changing our attitude to education and fearlessly establishing an Indian system of education. Otherwise the present situation will lead us to destruction of all that is precious in our civilization and we will become a country without culture or refinement.

The moment is now, for there is yet with us the spark of all that is best of our past. If we allow that spark to be extinguished we will be pushed towards a materialistic culture which will make India a nation without a soul, empty and barren. India's voice still counts in the world because of the wisdom of our forefathers and the rich treasures we have inherited from them. We must change, we must be new, but at all costs we must be Indian both in spirit and in form.

Even when the White Huns destroyed the great University of Takshasila in 455 A.D., Indian education was not destroyed. Nor did it die when the Hindu and Buddhist Universities were destroyed by the Muslims, for even during the height of Muslim reign, toleration was shown to all religions and institutions known as the Madarsas were established by the Muslims by which Indian culture was enriched. Indian education perished only when the village system was destroyed and English education became established and became the only recognised symbol of culture.

Gandhiji has again and again said that our education should be Indian, based on Indian ideals. Similarly Vivekananda has said "A nation is advanced in proportion as education and intelligence spreads among the masses". One reads in books of the intense devotion of the Indian people for learning. One reads descriptions of the way students thronged the city of Navadwipa for literary discussions in search of higher knowledge. Dr.Besant said "Learning in India has ever been regarded as greater than wealth and rank, the acquisition of wisdom, as more worthy of reverence than the jewelled diadem of kings".

We have once again to regard the teacher's profession as the noblest of all profession and the noblest and greatest in our country. Only those that consider it as such must be gathered together to take up educational work thinking it their greatest service to our Motherland. Let all without distinction of race, of religion, with or without diplomas or degrees, come forward to lead in this crusade against barbarism and the mechanical learning which is now called education. I continually hear people talk of the necessity for young people to learn for learning's sake and not to concern themselves with diplomas, degrees and examinations. Yet the very people who advise this do not recognise the capacity of individuals for specific

work without asking for their formal qualifications and degrees. Is not qualification of character, knowledge and capacity sufficient? This alone must be required of one who aspires to be a teacher.

Everywhere, I hear of the need for character but what is being done in our educational systems for the development of character? Youth will never learn from those who only preach. Example alone can teach and we ask for morals when we do not even believe enough in morality to establish Moral education. India's roots are in religion, yet we do not allow religious education. Just because the religious spirit has deteriorated to prejudice and narrowness, we decide to give up the whole basis of our civilization which gave us morality and the true spirit of service. If a vessel is stained, do we clean the vessel or do we throw it away? Only religion can give us that aspiration of the soul which alone will take us away from thought of ourselves. As it is, today, we may disbelieve in God the supreme Ruler of the Universe, but we replace God by ourselves and selfishness is the result. Corruption, dishonesty, immorality, all these are varied forms of selfishness and what we are suffering from is selfishness.

Education should have three great keynotes; of Religion (universal and comparative), of Art and of Humanity. The youthful mind learns more from the environment than from actual teaching. What is lacking today is the education of the emotions, though humanity is chiefly dominated by emotion. Action is the result of emotion. While the mind directs action the impulse that guides the mind is emotion. Our present system of education is so purely intellectual that it has lost its creative force. Even the eagerness to learn, comes from a perception of the vast ocean of learning. This perception can only come through a creative imagination and this does not grow except under the soul stirring force of beauty which makes each one a creator. Our schools and colleges are not only devoid of beauty but are positively ugly. No wonder that Indian youth which learns within the prison walls of ugliness and in the spirit of competition which the present examination system inculcates, stops learning or thinking after the examinations are over, for the creative spirit is deadened. In the ancient days of the *asramas*, every university or educational Institution

was in the forest amongst trees, rivers and lakes. One finds the same concept in Greece where no temple or place of study or theatre was chosen unless there was the atmosphere of beauty that nature alone can give.

Annie Besant says of Indian Education: "Even after the forest period, Indian Universities were ever built in scenes of natural beauty, surrounded by lovely gardens fragrant with blossoms and shady trees, surrounded by a high wall, with guarded gates at which the "entrance examination" was actually conducted. The site of an insignificant village might sometimes be selected, because of its beauty".

The same ideal inspired our great poet Rabindranath Tagore to say : "In the first two periods the forest was the fountain-head of civilisation. There, trees and plants, rivers and lakes had ample opportunity to live in close relationship with men. In these forests, though there was human society, there was no crowding. The current of civilisation that flowed from its forests inundated the whole of India".

Today we seem to believe that if art is taught in schools, it is enough. Art cannot be taught. Art has to be imbibed in an environment of beauty. What the ancients knew by intuition modern educationists like Dr. Maria Montessori have expressed now as their own discovery. She believed that the child learns from its environment and from the atmosphere around. She even visualised that one day a new born baby would grow hearing only beautiful music and as it opens it eyes would find a world of colour. These are utterly important for the child. In fact, Indians went even further in the ancient days by saying that even before it is born the happiness and beauty that surrounds the mother are of great value to the character of the child to be born.

It we remove all our schools, colleges and universities to places of beauty, where they can study and live, the entire atmosphere of India would change. Some may say that this is not possible because of the large numbers who are being educated. It is a well known fact that ancient universities like Nalanda, Takshasila, Vikramasila and Nadiya had thousands of pupils living together and learning.

Generally speaking, our boys and girls reach college level education at the average age of puberty when there is a tremendous emotional upheaval in

their natures. Dr.Montessori was of the opinion that the age of puberty should be specially the age of service. Humanitarian work, social service, animal welfare work as well as creative work with the hands would be a tremendous outlet for their emotional life at this stage. Art, music, dance, drama and other fine arts would refine their emotions and elevate their spirit. Instead, their emotions without correct channeling finds outlet in destruction, in slogans, and shouting, and antisocial habits.

The college should provide for real learning including all arts and crafts. At present, college education is just a means to Government service. They may take up one subject in college just for the degree and take up another as their profession. This is a waste. Immediately after school students should be given training according to their aptitude and ambition as a serious training for one's life work. The main portion of the study should be for their life's work with cultural subjects added. The first and most important principle to be kept in mind is that every activity or profession is a form of service to the nation and however intelligent or capable an individual is, he cannot truly help the country without the basic spirit of dedication which comes with cultural training. This must be the basis for the college, the school and any institution where teaching is given on any subject.

But none of this is possible as long as the city is the environment for education. The village, the country and places of beauty and seclusion are tremendous character builders, and absolutely essential for educational work.

Today there is much talk about education of the masses and the villages. When Vivekananda, Dr.Besant, Tagore, Gandhiji and others spoke of going into the village they meant that Indian life was rooted in the villages. We are today applying it wrongly, by thinking that the city has to *educate* the villages, while in reality the whole basis of Indian life was the village centre from which radiated all knowledge and life. Unless this point of view is understood, we will do more harm than good for by trying to educate masses we shall only spread our ignorance and egotism farther afield. Even what remains Indian will come under this pernicious influence.

In education we have threefold ways of training; the hand the heart and the mind. Educationists have also divided the training of the individual into three definite age patterns.

The child till the age of seven is at the first stage of development. All, religions and systems of education have recognised that the most important period of life is up to seven and that the learning acquired in this period will be the most powerful influence in the life of an individual. The child learns by the environment and by its hands. Madame Montessori has given us the true secret of the child. She has taught us that what is usually considered the destructive nature of the child is actually constructive for it is a learning process. By its sensitive fingers, the child can learn all subjects manually including Mathematics, Geography etc., She has shown us that the child's life must be creative and beautiful. She has to a certain extent expressed the same ideas as Gandhiji in his concept of basic education of making the child self-reliant and capable through exercises in practical life.

The next period is between seven and the end of the age of puberty, that is fifteen or sixteen. This is the age of the mind, heart and hand, where we should inculcate the desire to learn for the sake of learning, where the young should learn to give, to sympathise and to create. The tender period of change from childhood to maturity is of the greatest importance. Stories of the great heroes, heroines, saints and saviours would give them emotional inspiration for boys and girls of this age are eager to absorb and learn.

Then comes the age of the College and University which carries forward their learning. In all these stages of learning there is need for the one quality above everything, the flower of all existence, the feeling of love. Whatever a teacher or a professor may possess, if the power of love is absent, then he or she might as well give up the profession. So much training is given to teachers, so many degrees are required, so many experts are consulted from inside and outside the country, but is ever a question asked whether the teacher loves the company of the young and whether he is loved and is inspiring? Every teacher should be put to this test, for children and youth will respond to those who love them and understand them. This power of love is almost entirely non-existent in those who are teachers today.

If a teacher can love and inspire he is indeed a great man and therefore makes his profession noble. This conception of the teacher is almost entirely forgotten. He is now a man who takes degrees and often ends up a teacher because he has no other way to earn a living either because of his inability or his circumstances. A radical change of attitude towards the teacher and by the teacher is the only way of salvation for our country. We pay a technician or a typist more than we would pay a teacher. Yet the teacher is the maker of the new age; the father, mother, and friend of youth. The love he or she showers upon the young is the very blessing that will make a student grow without fear, the fear which is the root cause of all our ills today. The young will grow without fear with tenderness to all, with pity for the weak and with strength in the face of sorrow and suffering. It is the lack of right feeling that produces ill-feeling between castes, creeds and races. Justice to all, generosity to the poor and true brotherhood towards all creation is the result of love and good feeling. How can we expect the young to have all this when we ourselves do not possess them? How can we ask them to change, when we ourselves do not wish to change? Can India do all this I ask? Yes, surely she can, for what India has done she can still do. Forms have changed from age to age, but the spirit of the ancient universities and schools remained the same whether in the Hindu, Buddhist or Islamic periods - but today the spirit has changed. We are Indians but the Indian outlook and spirit is quickly vanishing. Let us strive to see once again, perhaps even greater than ever before, the wisdom and beauty of India shining like two eyes on the faces of the young, for the young alone will express the heritage of our noble motherland.

- Central Hindu College - 14th March 1945.

Science and Human Values

In this age of changing values when the entire world is dominated by a materialistic approach to life, it is of utmost importance for scientists, philosophers, artists, and others to think together and see how our contribution to the modern world can help bring greater happiness and peace to all living beings. We may classify human beings as being scientists, artists, technologists, and so on. But whatever our mode of approach may be and in whatever field of human endeavour we may be active, the fact remains that we are human beings, human beings first unto the end of our lives. To me, science, art, and religion are all ultimately one and the same, and ultimately lead us to the one goal, the goal of self-realisation which is the acceptance of the fact that the Self means not merely you or I or any individual, but the life that pervades all manifested and unmanifested creation. Sri Krishna talks of many paths and says to Arjuna that they all lead to Him alone. We may think of His teachings as applying to all types of temperaments and religions, but His words can also mean that all forms of knowledge and experience also lead to an ultimate unity.

For intellectuals, the most dominant topic of interest for the present age is science with all its branches of knowledge. Science has almost conquered the world by its spectacular and almost miraculous advance and achievements. As the desire for scientific studies and knowledge increases in the world, the more imperative it becomes to emphasise the human value, for, without it, the human intellect can become a formidable and dangerous force. The people of the world are afraid of the hydrogen bomb, nuclear weapons and many other such deadly devices which have been invented. We can only imagine, but imagine with a great deal of accuracy, what will yet be invented. In fact, actually, one should be more

afraid of the human intellect that is able to produce all these things than of the weapons themselves. How much further will the human mind go, and what more miracles of knowledge are we going to witness? Although one admires all this development, we can always ask the question "what happiness is going to be derived by humanity from it". Of course, intellectuals always say we are going to achieve the incredible. We shall travel many times faster than sound; we shall visit other planets; we shall live much longer; be more comfortable and enjoy ourselves. While science can make all these things possible, the scientist, at least the great scientist, must surely find happiness in something beyond all the achievements which is the experience he has of discovering new potentials of life. It is as if he is penetrating veil after veil of the mystery of life and discovering the same indwelling, omnipresent, existence everywhere. So, what science does to the scientist is different from what science does to the world. To the scientist there is the discovery of life itself, in every form, in every manifestation; the discovery of a world of unlimited grandeur. He can beautify this world in which there is truth, but a truth that grows and changes so that no one can say "I have discovered it in its ultimate essence". To the scientist, today's truth is no more than a reality of tomorrow. By this discovery, he finds the unlimited nature of life. He may be said to have discovered God and realised himself as a part of the creation and the Creator.

To me, this discovery is the very essence of life's purpose and is the goal of existence. It is the same goal that *yogis* aim at and discover in another way. It is the purpose for which religion exists and which in reality religion teaches. To the scientist, knowledge is the end and the continued effort to know more or the search for knowledge is the end and the continued effort to know more or the search for knowledge is an end in itself. While this may be true and while he may not be conscious of any other factor, we have to acknowledge that knowledge can never be obtained without its effect upon himself as a man, without its effect on his emotions, his attitude to life, on his outlook upon humanity, and on his relationship to all. In fact, no one lives alone even if he has to live in two worlds. Ultimately, this is a spiritual experience which comes as a result of contact with nature. This spiritual experience should make one realise that we all belong to a unitary consciousness,

whether man, animal, plant or mineral. If we experience all this is a part of a greater consciousness, this experience would be called religion.

This is the human and individual experience of a scientist, the *yogi*, a sage, and also, ultimately, that of the artist. The social approaches are different. While the means are different, the experience is the same. Without this aim, there can be no happiness in life and, surely, all knowledge must elevate humanity. Science or knowledge is a force and a power. Can such a force and power bring happiness to humanity unless human values are understood? What is knowledge for and how can it be an end in itself? It cannot and should not, according to my opinion, for, if it is an end in itself, divorced from life and human values it can become the destroyer of humanity and an evil force, ultimately, in its turn, to be destroyed by the greater force of human understanding and love. While science is an instrument for understanding cosmic principles, the result of scientific investigation and research can ultimately do the opposite, i.e. instead of unifying, it can end by destroying and disrupting human relationship. Ultimately, there is no greater experience than the relationship between man and man; and that between man and all nature which includes the animal and plant kingdoms. All religions, saints, and philosophers have preached that to be human does not merely imply the development of the mind but the development of the heart as well. For a human being to be a complete individual, the mind, heart and the soul must live in harmony with each other so that the hidden god within finds expression in the unity with all life. When man does not pay attention to all these factors, science becomes desecrated by the cold mind that merely distracts truth and becomes cruel. Mind alone is a destroyer. It has been said by great teachers that the mind is the slayer of the real. We have seen wars, great wars like the last world war, and have seen, in Hiroshima, the effect of the instruments of destruction produced by science and used by heartless and ambitious humans. So, unless human values and their teachings have an important place in our lives, science and its progress are actually a danger to humanity. This is why the great teachers of humanity in India stressed the importance of another aspect of science - the science of the Self.

Modern scientists, with rare exceptions, generally think of science as an end

in itself. The every day human being thinks of all the benefits to humanity. What are these benefits worth to us human beings except to make us more and more selfish and power conscious! It has been said "man cannot live by bread alone". We may add that man cannot live by the advantages of a materialistic age alone, and that we are in danger of becoming more and more materialistic. With all the discoveries that make travel and communication easier, our world is more torn by strife and misunderstanding than ever before. Though the World War II came to an end, wars have not ceased and since 1945 we live still in fear of another world war. We give a sigh of relief when one crisis is over only to be faced with another, similar, crisis.

All these discoveries and advances in technology have done one thing which did not exist before and that is to make us world conscious. Every trouble, every difference of opinion, political and otherwise, has now world wide repercussions. When Kennedy was assassinated, it became an event of world importance. When Martin Luther King was shot, once again the fear of world opinion and of world conflagrations came into existence. In fact, today, we all are far more conscious of evil than of the good, and a powerful evil man attracts world attention more than the great man of compassion, unless he be of the calibre of the Lord Buddha, Lord Krishna or the Christ. Rarely indeed do such beings come into the world. Even then we pay heed to them for a short while, perhaps for a few hundred years after which we follow our own selfish ways. If to this selfishness and the lack of vision of the small man great knowledge is given with the power to make use of it for selfish purposes, destruction of man by man will be the only result.

The Lord Buddha has said that the root cause of all evil is selfishness. Today we want to give scientific knowledge to every child. I agree it is wonderful to know the laws of nature. They can teach us to be humble, for we human beings are as nothing before the grandeur of nature. Nature is more powerful than the scientist though he tries to conquer nature. Nature is more beautiful than what man can create through art or even imitate. However wonderful a painting is of a sunset, it will still be only a means of reminding us of the creative beauty of nature. It is good for us to feel this and understand our place. We can try to conquer space,

reach other planets. What man can do is undoubtedly great and is a miracle in itself, but yet, when man does not understand himself or other men, all this capacity is of no use to the world. Has all this knowledge brought more unity to the world? Do we know each other better? What has been the result of the League of Nations, the United Nations, the UNESCO, and other organisations? Wars are still going on in the world, sometimes wars even more cruel than were ever fought before, thanks to the scientific discoveries. Even the desire for one language in the world, though good in itself, can never achieve brotherhood. On the other hand, there will be a common medium of communication for greater quarrels.

As for India itself, we had far greater cultural unity even when we had only the bullock cart as transport, no radios, cinemas and other forms of mass communications. Valmiki's Ramayana, the Puranas, the Upanishads, the Songs of Saints, the poetry of Jayadeva and Kalidasa were known all over India, while today, they are being popularised by spending large sums of money on mass media. All this shows that every bit of energy spent on all these is a waste unless scientific education goes hand in hand with the education of every child, man and woman, along the right paths of living and spiritual aspiration.

It is said that in ancient days scientific knowledge existed in all fields of thought including astrology, astronomy, medicine like Ayurveda and Siddha systems. Much of this knowledge influenced western thought and western civilisation. But India emphasised that all knowledge was subservient to human values. In ancient India and particularly in the Hindu religion, there was no law laid down as to what you may believe. Religion meant knowledge and action. Knowledge meant all knowledge, everything that affects man, and all that affects man and his relationship to life. So, knowledge as expressed through unselfish action to make this relationship a happy and beautiful one, is called *Dharma* which is a far better word than the English word religion. It is because the search for knowledge combined with unselfishness was of such importance that truth became the most important theme in the Ramayana, Mahabharta and other epics. Not *THE TRUTH*, because this is impossible to discover but truth which according to our level of understanding may be different under different

circumstances. To act according to this truth with the purest motive was and is the Dharma of the individual.

The most wonderful sentence in Sanskrit is: *There is no religion higher than truth.* Truth is unlimited and, therefore, the freedom of mind to discover it was allowed, but while doing this the place of the individual in society was not forgotten. For this the disciplining of ourselves, the knowledge of the self and right action formed part of our *Dharma* or religion. This was the teaching of the *yogis* who penetrated into the realms of the higher mind and who by self-discipline were able to understand and control nature. They achieved the purpose of *yoga* which is to discover the unity of life. The modern scientist says *understand everything around you*, but in the East the ancient scientist said *Understand everything within you*', your emotions, your mind and your consciousness. Then only will happiness come to you and to all around you. This is the essence of religion, the perfect blending of heart and mind. While in the highest region the scientist of the status of Einstein touches the cosmic emotion of unity and harmony through the mind, the artist who works through his feelings, touches the minds
through the mind, the artist who works through his feelings, touches the minds
through his highest emotions. Religion teaches the blending of the two. Right relationship in life can only be achieved through the qualities of the heart and mind, education must be combined with the education of the heart. If human values are important as we know they are, an urgent revolution must take place in the educational system.

Morality must be the foundation of all aspects of living and knowledge. It is strange how often one hears that a scientist does not need religion. A person who thinks so, according to me, does not understand either religion or science. The most important thing in religion is not a set of beliefs, dogmas or doctrines, but the teaching of living, particularly living in harmony with all that lives. Investigation into right living, knowing how to live under every circumstance, is in itself a science of life. Religion, in its highest sense, teaches us not merely to change our circumstances but to change ourselves. Surely this is practical, because all of us who live and have our problems and difficulties cry out that life is difficult and

wish it could be changed, but do not realise that if we changed our mental attitude, all that forms our make-up can be different. To achieve what we want is difficult, but, yet every man wants to achieve happiness. This is why every individual tries to find happiness at any price.

True religion teaches us the that there is no good end without the right means, that happiness is the end of our achievement as well as the right way of obtaining it. So, in the same way, knowledge as an end without the right path or means being used to achieve it, can never give the true fruits of knowledge to the world. There are many fields of science and technology, including the science of medicine, in which there have been spectacular developments. Great strides have been made and in the medical world, we find men doing almost the work of the creator, though, so far, man cannot save life for all time nor can he control death as he is attempting to control birth. We may think we are bringing much peace and happiness to the world by saving life. Man is an irrational being. We destroy millions through war and try to save millions by medicine! Yet, I believe war will continue to exist as long as we try to save through wrong means. It is unfortunate that many in the world think that we can save people only through sacrificing millions of creatures and torturing them in the medical colleges, laboratories and pharmaceutical institutions.

To me, the basic philosophy is wrong when we think that, just because helpless creatures which should find love and protection from human beings are available for our use and exploitation, they should be tortured to discover a fancied relief for man. If a child is dumb or deaf, does the child cease to have feelings? Just because the animals cannot speak, do animals have no sense of pain or suffering? Yet, we think it is right to use them, experiment on them most cruelly, often even without anaesthesia, send them up in rockets and so on. Now one reads of these heart transplantations and how a baboon's heart is to be removed so that it can become a repository of a human heart, once again to be operated on for transplating it on to a human heart, once again to be operated on for transplanting it on to a human being in case of need. If we have no sense of the sacredness of life, nor compassion for a living creature, no human life will ever be respected or

protected. The proof of this has been common human experience from early history to today. We think nothing, not only of killing but of torturing an enemy. We have seen such things in the unforgettable World War II. I know that scientists in the modern medical field generally think that everything is right if done for the sake of knowledge. Nothing can be scientifically or in any other way correct if it is morally wrong, and I am sure with the powers and the intelligence that man possesses it is possible for scientists to achieve the same results or even better results in medicine if they have their basic philosophy right. We must not take for granted that sensitive creatures with obvious emotion and feeling may be cruelly exploited.

This I know is a controversial subject and there is much to say which cannot be said now. Differences of opinion are bound to exist but whatever the differences, it is imperative that there should be serious thinking on the part of those who are concerned with the healing science, as millions of living creatures are daily being used cruelly for the purpose of medical science. Cruel means cannot be used for ultimate good and can surely harm humanity by making them heartless. What good is there in saving the body at the cost of minds and feelings hardened? This basic attitude to life is the foundation of life and has been so from time immemorial. It has been emphasised by the great teachers of humanity who have consistently said that life is dear to all creatures, and that he whose life is filled with compassion is indeed the noblest of all beings. We are today celebrating Gandhiji's centenary. Let us not forget what he said: *we should be able to refuse to live if the price of living be the torture of sentient beings*. Let us remember the saying of the Buddha, *pity makes the world soft to the weak and noble for the strong*. The greatest gift of the human being is to be truly humane, and this is the basis of human values applicable to scientists, artists, politicians and all others. For this the education of the heart is important.

Unfortunately, people think that art is meant for our spare time or for entertainment. Actually it is for life and is life itself. The science of the emotions is a great science understood only by those gifted with true perception. What modern psychology does is elementary, for it merely stirs up the emotions.

Sometimes the emotions and thoughts that lie dormant are released to become serious problems to humans as when Pandora's box was opened. What art does is not merely to stir up the emotions but to sublimate them. Unless the creative aspect in each of us is moulded by the inspiration and teaching of art, complexes develop in our lives and destructive elements gradually begin to control us. I know much goes for art today, and ugliness masquerades as beauty as violence is held up as the means to achieve justice and harmony. Art reflects life and what evils we see in the name of art is only a reflection of the evil that is finding expression in life today. Morality at the highest level is as important in the field of art as in the field of science.

Education must be devoid of all these and it must be for living. When degrees are taken, jobs are found, wealth is accumulated and age creeps on us, the individual will need the firm foundation of character to deal with life and to set an example of true living.

The great and noble artists are messengers of beauty and point out to man the eternal beauty within each of us. It is the one universal language that does not need a tongue to speak with except itself. Its only medium is sensitiveness and feeling. In the realm of art there are no natural barriers. Art and science are the only two forces which create no barriers. Yet, this depends on how we use them and present them. Art is the one influence that can mellow and bind. While the mind has the tendency to separate, art unites, for its message is the message of beauty. For me, true art is an expression of beauty, for, even when human emotions like sorrow and anger are expressed through art, in reality, at the same time, it teaches us how they can be sublimated and elevated to higher emotions. The real importance of art in education is not only to teach appreciation of beauty and nature, but to influence the senses and to creative sensitivity. Through the appreciation of beauty which the artists express and the appreciation of true works of art, each of us unconsciously becomes sensitive to sound, form, colour, and touch. This sensitivity develops also into a sensitivity to surroundings, people, and everything else. Art is an expression of the soul which turns outwards in expression. By this, each one becomes creative in life. It is not necessary to be an

artist in any particular form, but one should be an artist in living which is the ultimate aim of art. This sensitiveness develops an emotional response to all around us. This response is of vital importance to each one of us as this is the basis of understanding. To understand evil and good, to understand suffering and happiness, is the only way in which humanity can live in harmony with others.

To turn our attention outwards takes us away from ourselves and brings a selfless love for all. It is never possible to be happy alone as we are part of this world. Ultimately, all knowledge must lead to this realisation. It is for this that education must be complete and not one-sided as it is today. The aesthetic sense which helps us in the fine points of life makes one civilised and contributes to the beauty of living both internally and externally. Where there is ugliness, cruelty and selfishness, there can be no civilisation. Culture is the essence of civilisation, but the essence of culture comes from a sensitive approach to life. Art can help create this atmosphere and invisibly help produce a sensitive individual to whom life is not merely material wealth but spiritual wealth as well.

This world, in spite of its many international and national organisations for better understanding, is surely more materialistic today than ever. This is because so little attention has been given to things affecting simple human values and to the individuality within each. This individuality with its aspirations, longings and needs, is divine in spite of human weaknesses. All knowledge and all education whether in the home or school, whether in the college or in life must embody the complete divinity of life and be given with the richness which we ourselves have inherited from the beauty of nature.

- School of Wisdom, Talk - 04.02.1959

One Nation - One People

It is strange to think, that after t he attainment of freedom, we have still to emphasise the unity of India and the one nation idea. With all the facilities of travel, mass communication and education, we now seem to be less conscious of India as a whole. Today we know, more than we ever did, about other parts of India, their customs food, handicrafts, art, music, etc. Though India is and was rich in its arts, there were hidden treasures in the form of architecture, sculpture, music and dance which belonged exclusively to one part or another of India, which specialised in these unique arts. It is only lately that we, in the South know of the dance and the music of other parts of India and the southern classical art of music and dance are now famous all over India and even far beyond India. Have all these facts helped to build in each one of us a consciousness of the one nation? It is unfortunate that, on the other hand, we have become more and more divided against ourselves. We believe that a common language can unify us, yet we are not united enough to agree upon a common language. In fact before we thought of a common spoken language we had a far better understanding of each other than we do today. The chief reason for this is that the new idea of a national language is based on different values and for a different purpose.

That, in spite of different languages and in spite of foreign domination, there was unity in India was obviously due to the fact that we looked for this unity elsewhere. India was said to have been divided into many kingdoms in the ancient days, yet, there was a unity of a different nature. Today, we are just part of one country with a variety of languages, customs, arts, etc. This variety obviously must add to the richness of our nation. Yet, are we able to appreciate this as we should? It is indeed amazing to think that, thousands of years ago, Valmiki's

Ramayana was sung in an obscure *Ashrama* in the middle of great forests and yet it became known to every part of India and in every corner of our country, giving inspiration to great poets like Tulsidas, Kambar and others to produce something equally great. Jayadeva sang his songs far away in the east and north, yet it spread to every temple in India giving joy to millions who heard these songs of devotion. To us, it was the melody of Krishna who pervaded all our beings whether he was born in the north or south was of no account. The great sculpture of the Gupta period and of the Pallava and Chola periods were different and yet alike, for behind the form was the undying spirit of India. Scholars and poets spread their knowledge from mouth to mouth as pilgrims travelled everywhere. Today, a great work of art needs publicity, money and sponsorship before it is accepted.

It is obvious that the consciousness of the one nation cannot come just by propaganda nor can we achieve this by the artificial means of what is known as mass communication media. Nor do I believe that politics can solve all problems. In the past many things progressed because each concentrated on what was his genius and his Dharma. The farmer concentrated on farming, the poet attended to his poetry, the musician to his music and the statesman to his duty. But, we are finding today, that nearly every one is either a politician or gets involved in politics. Even the artist and the teacher has become involved in this and this is the chief reason for gradual decline of our country. For an artist, if he is left alone, there is no problem of language, for he has a language at his command which cannot divide. There are people who think that even art cannot unite unless every form of art borrows from everywhere and there can never be progress without this change. With this in view, there is beginning to be, in India, a mixture of everything which leads to a cultural chaos. Art has always grown by adding to itself new beauty and new influence. South East Asian countries which have their own unique forms of art have developed their own uniqueness form one central source. We can see that the central source was India and the influence of India is seen in the sculpture, the dance, the dramas, and even in the themes chosen, as in Cambodia, Thailand, Indonesia and other countries. So within India too, art has changed, grown and has become enriched so that the tremendous variety in our arts actually emphasises the cultural unity of our country.

This enrichment came because there was obviously never an attempt made to copy the forms, for the sake of showmanship. The life behind the form, the inspiration of the subject, the teachings, the philosophy and the soul of India inspired the creative artist to learn and create his own form of art-exactly as a great musician learns from a great master and gives his own individual expression of creative music. This produces a unity in spirit though a diversity in form. This has been the great contribution of India. It can yet be the great contribution of modern India if only we change our values. If we value our culture, our traditions, teachings and our way of life we can truly become a nation. To become a nation does not mean just the attaining of political freedom. The freedom of the unwise can only lead to disintegration. Only the democracy of the wise can produce a nation that will develop its own genius and leadership. Genius can develop only when the individual places value on things that matter. However much we may put on the garb of a saint or of a hero, this can only remain an empty form unless the way of life which that garb denotes and the right values in life are understood. There are only two ways in which, I believe, this nation can be built into a country that matters. One is right education and the second is art. Books, stamps, statues and publicity are not going to build character w hen we use them only as propoganda material. The living memorial in the form of the child whom we educate is more important than clay and bronze. In education we say, on the one hand, that we do not want any religion taught but we place before the minds of the young examples of great men and women who themselves were inspired by their devotion to some Great Being. We are obviously contradicting ourselves for we believe in every great thing that our country has produced without acknowledging the source from which it has come. We want the tree, but not its roots and surely the tree must decay without its roots. In the same way, there is decay in our character, in our education, in our arts and in our civilisation in general, because we have not the courage to accept the inevitability of our past. Our culture is definitely based upon spiritual traditions. No one says or can say that these traditions have not been formed and formulated by accepting the validity both of change and of the changeless. Change there must be, as long as there is time, growth and evolution. Change is natural and therefore we must change but only naturally. A plant on a soil which is foreign to it cannot

thrive. So also the adoption of habits, entertainment and a way of life except as part of the progress referred to above cannot but be unnatural.

In our education, we are unnatural for we have not really discovered what I would call Indian Education. There is no real national character in our schools and colleges and surely the most important keynote in education is Culture. To produce a cultured individual - whether he or she be an engineer, scientist, doctor or teacher - should be our aim. If this is so what part does art, Indian art, play in the lives of the young, whether they be boys or girls. What part does nature and the appreciation of nature, the love of colour and beauty, play in their lives and what part does the ancient teachings of our philosophy play in the lives of the young? Does our education stress the supremacy of *Dharma*? To me a lack of all this is a tragedy for it is like wanting to enjoy the water of the Ganga while polluting its source. Someday, perhaps, even today, our nation will become a cultural desert. We pay so much attention to language when the language of languages, art is near at hand. To me the only hope of our country is the stress on culture. We may confuse and think we are developing our culture by encouraging art. In fact we can even destroy it by encouraging so called art, unless we go behind all art and discover what promotes and creates art forms.

Most important of all, neither education nor art must in any way be sullied by commercialism. They must quietly go their own way for, however much we may give importance to the place of art in our democracy, art is an expression of individual genius. Individual genius must be allowed to grow and flower into full beauty. Even one such great artist can change the world. There can be no national integration without the acceptance of this fact. No political leader can bring about the integration that a supreme artist can because true art can only build, harmonise and unite. That is its power. Have we the eyes, the ears or the wisdom to use the power? If we have not, then we must wait for another generation when a great leader will be born to build on the ruins of our creation.

- All India Radio - 19.02.1968

GLOSSARY

Auchitya - Aptness, Fitness, Propriety of a subject

Anga - Limb, or member of the body

Alarippu - blossoming - Opening as a flower

Abhinaya - Literally "to carry forward" mime through gestures and expressions in dance

Agama Sastra - Traditional doctrine or precept; sacred scripture

Alwars - Devotees of the Vishnu Sect

Ananda - Joy – Supreme bliss

Aharya - Costume or ornamentation. One of four kinds of Abhinaya

Avataras- Incarnation of the Supreme God in various forms. Birth of a divine person

Bhava - Sanskrit term for emotion or feeling. Bhavas are classified as "Sthayin" primary or "Vyabhicharin" subordinate. The former are eight or nine according to the Rasas, each Rasa having its own "Sthayibhava". The later are thirty three or thirty four in number and serve to develop and strengthen the prevailing sentiment.

Buddhi - Intellect. Comprehension

Bhagavatar - Belonging to the sect of Vishnu. Holy man. Ministrel. Later term came to be used for classical musicians.

Bommalattam - Tamil term for Puppet Show from "Bommai" (doll) "Attam" – (show)

Bol - Hindi term for vocal expression of drum beats for the dance

Darshan - To behold, especially used to denote seeing or perceiving divine objects

Devas - Gods; Supernatural beings

Deeksha - Taking a vow, Consecration for a religious ceremony.

Devadasi - Dancing girls attached to temples; to offer music and dance as a form of worship. Later degraded to women of easy virtue.

Dharma - Religious or moral precept. Righteousnouss. Regarded as one of the four ends of human existence.

Dhwani - Tone or echo. In rhetoric it is used to denote the first and best of three main divisions of poetry or music in which the implied sense is more striking than the expressed sense.

Garuda - The Divine Eagle. Vehicle of Lord Vishnu. Generally represented as a being between man and bird in mythology. Son of Kasyapa Maharishi and Vinatha.

Gopi - Milkmaid. In mythology they belong to Brindavan where Sri Krishna was brought up as a cowherd.

Hanuman - Divine monkey chief, son of the Wind God. Devotee of Lord Rama.

Jatayu - Semi divine bird in the Ramayana who tries to stop Ravana when he abducts Sita, and is killed in the fight.

Jnani - Enlightened person. Seer.

Kaliyuga- The fourth stage or Iron age of the world. When there is all round deterioration as per the Sastras.

Kirtanam - A religious song. A set form in Carnatic Music.

Kolattam - Tamilian folk dance, performed to the beat of sticks held in the hand.

Kummi - Tamilian folk dance of girls performed with clapping of hands.

Moksha - Deliverance of the soul from recurring births; the last of the four ends of human existence.

Nagaswaram - A musical wind instrument, played on all auspicious occasions in Tamil Nadu.

Nattuvanar - Professional dance teachers of Tamil Nadu who also conduct dance performances.

Nayanmar - Devotees of Siva. Canonized Saiva Saints of the Tamil Country.

Pralaya - Destruction of the world at the end of Kalpa.

Pratyanga - Every limb large and small.

Purvangam - Preparatory prayer to God before the performance.

Rasa - Feeling or Emotion conveyed through music and dance. Generally classified as eight. Sometimes the emotion of "Shanta" is added making it nine.

Tamasic - Pertaining to the lower emotions. The third or darker side of human nature.

Tejas - Brilliance - Luminosity

Tiraseela - Curtain held before a dancer and removed when the character is introduced through music.

Ustad - Urdu word denoting a Master Musician.

Upanga - Any minor limb or member, subdivision.

SRIMATI RUKMINI DEVI ARUNDALE

Rukmini Devi has been a revolutionary in many fields starting with her marriage to an Englishman Dr.G.S. Arundale, Theosophist and Educationist himself. She has contributed greatly to the rejuvenation of Indian Art, both as the revivifier of dance and the inspirer of a great cultural movement. For a brahmin to learn and to perform Bharatanatyam was a revolutionary step which she took and this led in 1936 to the establishment of that Centre of classical art – Kalakshetra - which has since become one of the premier institutions of India, where dance, music, sculpture and the crafts are taught in a Gurukula atmosphere. In Kalakshetra Rukmini Devi maintained the purity and beauty of the spirit embodied in the great art traditions of India, combined with the highest standards of technique and learning in order to prepare artists and teachers to move towards a renaissance of Indian Culture.

In the course of this endeavour, Rukmini Devi innovated a new genre based on authentic old traditions – the dance drama. The 25 dance dramas that she has choreographed, including the famous Ramayana productions are some of the finest art creations of modern India.

As a pioneer in education Rukmini Devi brought Dr. Maria Montessori to India to start Teacher's Training Courses. She also established two schools with the watchword "Education without fear".

In order to revive the traditional handlooms of India she established a Weaving Department in Kalakshetra to which was added a Kalamkari Unit for revival of the craft of Vegetable Dyes.

Her compassion for the dumb creatures made her take up the work of animal welfare and as an M.P. she piloted a bill in the Parliament for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. She later became the first Chairman of the Animal Welfare Board.

Her efforts to educate people in many matters of artistic taste and humanitarian feeling were exemplified in her involvement with the Theosophical Movement, the Vegetarian Congress, Unesco Work and Tibetan Relief Work.

Rukmini Devi Arundale, pioneer in the revival of Bharatanatyam and resuscitation of India's traditional arts and crafts was also a great humanist and educationist. A gifted speaker she raised her voice in many national and international forums advocating India's supermacy in spirituality and tolerance.

Born in a conservative Brahmin family of Tamilnadu, Rukmini Devi broke all conventions when at the tender age of sixteen, she married George Sydney Arundale, an Englishman, who was prominent in the Indian Independence Movement as lieutenant to Dr.Annie Besant. A great educationist and Theosophist Dr.Arundale was instrumental in opening Rukmini's eyes to other cultures and philosophies of the world. She established Kalakshetra in 1936 for training students in Bharatanatyam and allied arts.

Nominated to the Rajya Sabha, Rukmini Devi piloted a Bill in Parliament for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, and spoke eloquently supporting many causes dear to her heart.

These two volumes being brought out on the occasion of the Birth Centenary of Rukmini Devi is a compilation of her speeches and writings on a wide variety of subjects.

The first volume contains speeches on dance, music, culture and education. The second volume consists of her speeches on animal welfare, parliamentary speeches, travel notes on her tours abroad, and lectures on spiritual subjects.



KALAKSHETRA FOUNDATION
Tiruvanmiyur • Chennai 600041 • INDIA